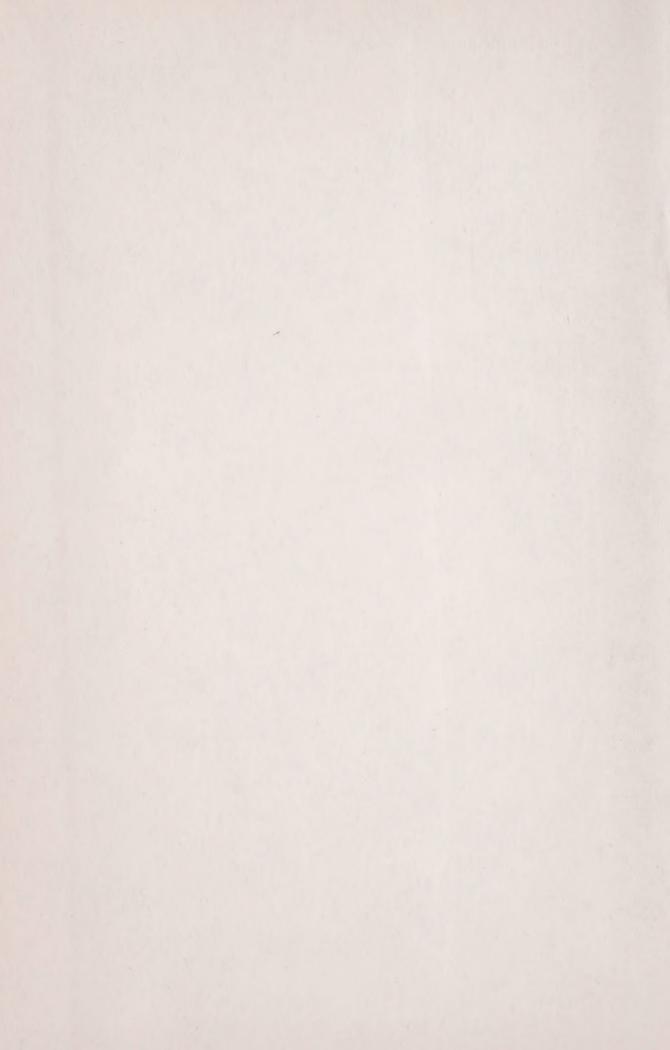
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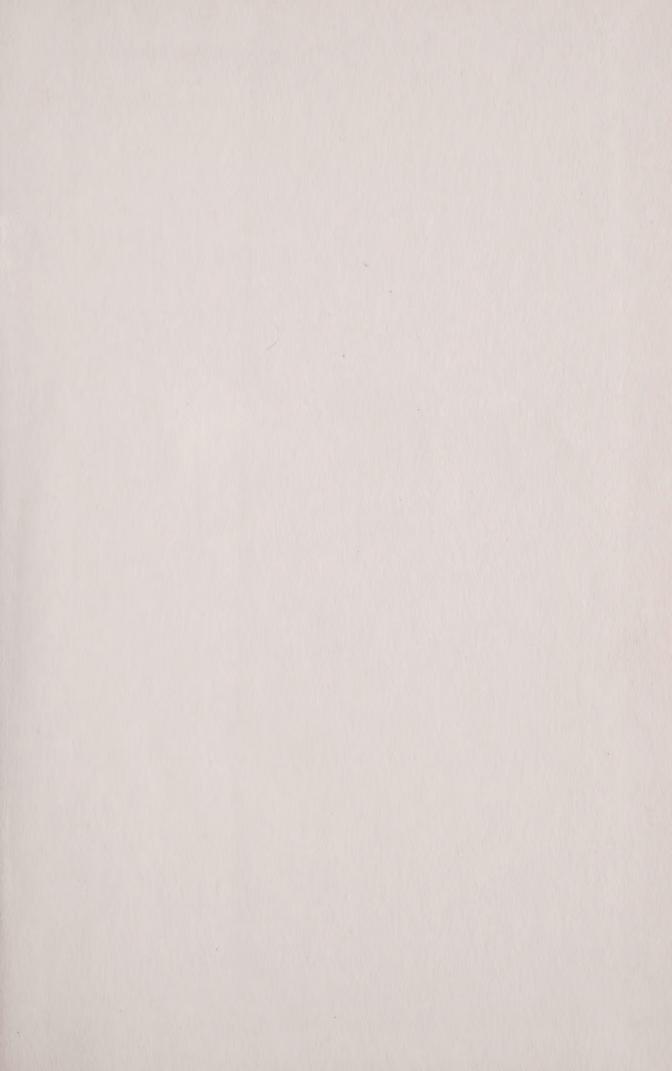


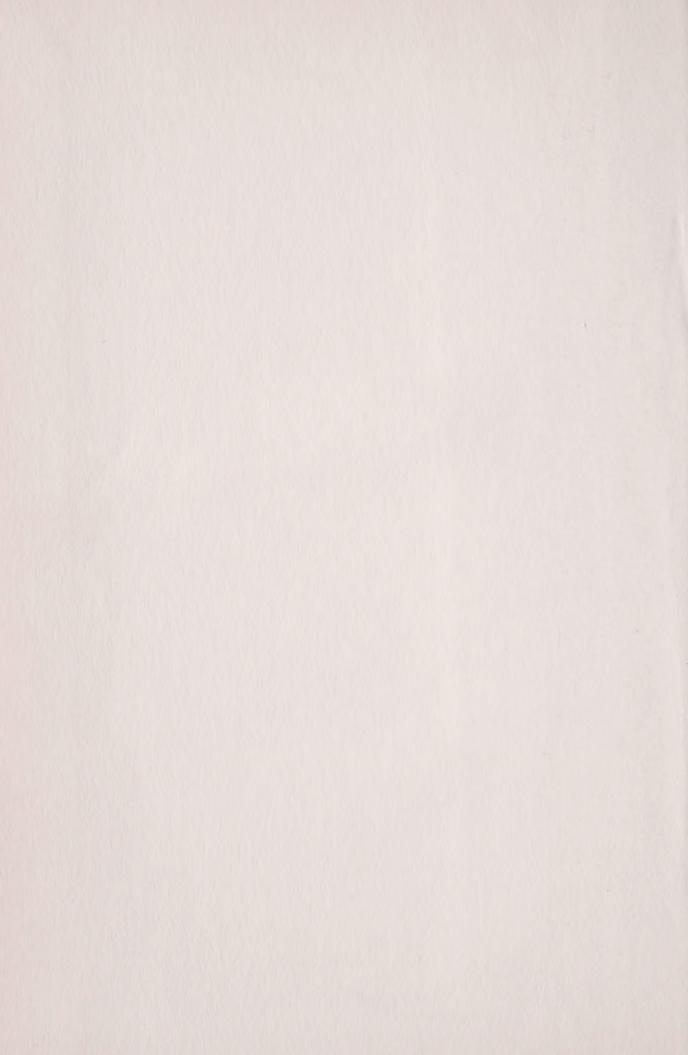
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OR,

FLOSSIE'S VIOLET.

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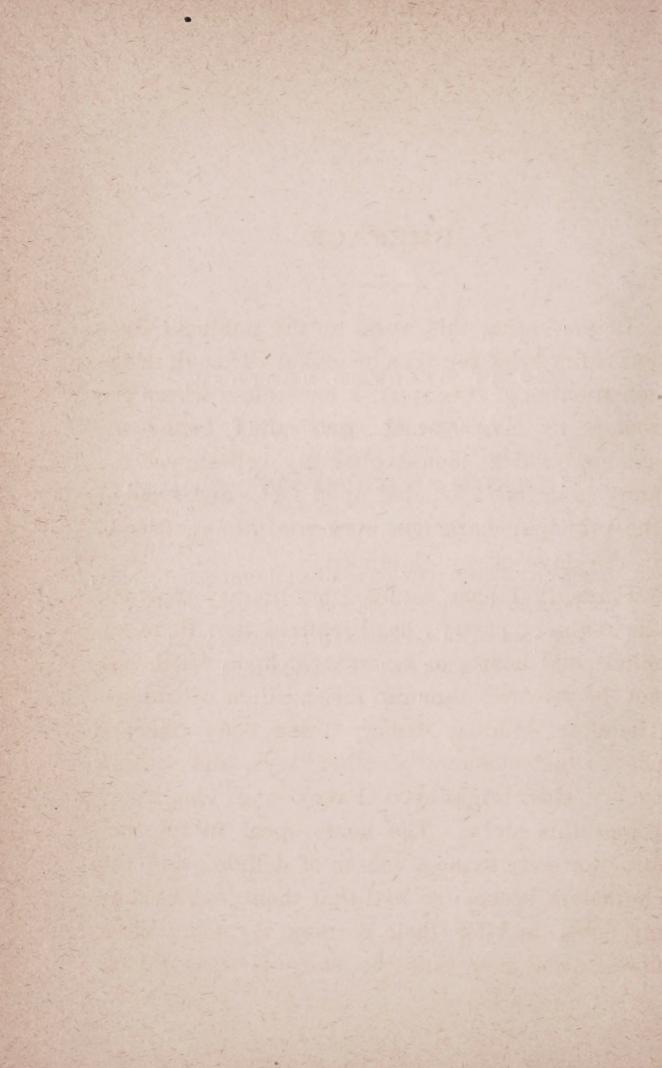
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JAMES M. JENNINGS,

THIS STORY IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

BY THE AUTHOR,

IN MEMORY OF THE HAPPY DAYS OF OUR CHILDHOOD, WHEN
WE PLAYED AMONG THE SCENES HEREIN DESCRIBED,
AND ENJOYED A PERSONAL ACQUAINTANCE
WITH SOME OF THE CHARACTERS
OF THIS STORY.



PREFACE.

In presenting this work to the public, I have but a few brief remarks to make. Though in the construction of this story I have often waved the romancer's magic wand, and called before me shadows which should obey my behest, yet the story is in itself founded upon facts, and some of the principal characters were my intimate friends in the days of my childhood.

Formerly I have confined my literary efforts to the realm of poetry; but I realized that there are minds and hearts to be wrought upon which can not be reached through the medium of rhyme. Therefore, bidding Memory bring before me the shapes and shadows of other days, and calling to my side bright-eyed Fancy and Ideality, I began this story. The hours spent in its construction were to me a season of delight; and the characters became so real that their joys became my joys, and for their sorrows my tears often flowed; and now that the story is done I look

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with what I believe to be a pardonable pride upon the work which has cost me many months of anxious care. I am convinced that my story will benefit every unprejudiced mind; and while I do not claim that it contains any profound knowledge, I believe that like as music, poetry, flowers and numerous other things which give delight to the human heart, this also will assist in lifting the weight of care from burdened minds, and make the hours pass brightly. And that it may cause the minds of its readers to reach out after the good, the beautiful, and the true, is the sincere wish of

THE AUTHOR.

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EDNA CARLISLE;

Or, FLOSSIE'S VIOLET.

CHAPTER I.

EDNA CARLISLE AND HER HOME.

"Mourn for the mourner, and not for the dead, For he is at rest, and we in tears."

One bright June morning, as the rising sun was sending his tremulous rays of light upon the earth, and flushing the sky with a glow of rosy dawn, the curtains of a luxuriously furnished apartment in a suburban cottage were drawn aside, that the dying eyes of Oscar Carlisle might look for the last time upon the glowing orb of day.

His eyes dwelt with a lingering gaze upon the world without; doubtless the earth and sky appeared to his dying eyes to be adorned with a new beauty, which he would fain have time to enjoy longer; but "unto dying eyes the casement slowly grows a glimmering square;" and with quivering lips and a weary sigh, he turned away; and his eyes filled with tears as his glance fell upon his wife, who was weeping near his bed.

(9)

She was a woman of perhaps twenty-eight years of age; her face, though wan from weary vigils and hopeless sorrow, still bore evident traces of beauty, and that she was of a gentle, affectionate disposition the dying man well knew, for it was those very qualities that had won his love.

She had been a sewing girl before their marriage; chance made them acquainted, and her beautiful face, her gentle, confiding disposition, and unsheltered life so won upon him that, notwithstanding his social position was higher than hers, he took her to his great loving heart and cherished her.

If he ever sighed that her soul could not mate with his, that she never could reach up to his high thoughts, none ever knew; but his love never wavered; and when Death began to cast his chilling bands about the heart of Oscar Carlisle, he felt that that agony shrank back, awed into quiet by the greater pain that wrenched his heart as he bade his grief-stricken wife a last good-bye.

After the farewells had been spoken he turned his dying eyes with eager, expectant gaze toward the door of the room.

Presently an elderly lady entered, leading two children; a boy aged five, and a little girl of three years.

The woman, evidently the mother of Mrs. Carlisle, was weeping bitterly; and the children, aroused from slumber at that early hour to bid their father good-bye, were frightened at the name

of death, which seemed coupled with so much sorrow.

With sobs and tears, the dying man clasped his children to his breast and kissed their wondering faces; then as the little girl cried pitifully to sit beside him, her grandmother lifted her upon the bed, where she might sit for the last time encircled by her father's arms.

Her fair baby face, with its dark blue eyes and clustering jet black hair, seemed a perfect miniature of the face of the dying man; and she sat beside him in the sweet ignorance of childhood, serenely smiling into his dying eyes, and all unconscious that those protecting arms, which, if he had lived, would have been so strong to defend her from the ills of life, would soon be folded across his silent heart.

Turning to his wife, Mr. Carlisle said:

"Gertrude, I regret now that I did not make my will; but I think that I can trust you to carry out my wishes." He paused a moment, then resumed the subject in a voice which grew more feeble with each utterance. "Give Archie a good education, and perhaps a few thousand to start him in life. I think that with careful management of what I leave you, you will be abundantly able to do so."

"But O!" he exclaimed in a broken whisper, as he clasped the little girl to his breast, "O Edna! my darling baby girl! with your life unsheltered by a father's love, who is to guide your feet into paths of pleasantness?"

He held her close in a dying embrace, his lips moving faintly, evidently in prayer; then came a low quivering sigh—the child began to cry, and struggle for release—her grandmother unclasped the embracing arms, and found that with his dying prayer, the soul of Oscar Carlisle had passed into the great beyond.

* * * * * * *

Eight years later we gather up the thread of our story, briefly sketching the interval.

Two years after the death of her husband, Mrs. Carlisle was married to George Slater, a professional gambler, who regarded his marriage to her much as he would a turn of the game, except that in this instance he played for larger stakes than usual, and had all to win, and nothing to lose.

In justice to the unfortunate woman we must add that she had no knowledge of the true character of the man; being of a truthful and affectionate disposition, she was not ready to believe evil of others; and she thought him the gentleman that he appeared to be; and when Time, the revealer of secrets, disclosed the man's true character, in bitterness of spirit she cried: "Let me die."

All of her money of which he could obtain the control passed rapidly from his hands at the gaming table.

At last, about two years after their marriage, he

apparently yielded to her admonitions and entreaties, and promised to start in business if she would furnish the means.

This request she gladly complied with, and he opened a large grocery store, and for a short time he appeared to prosper. It was not long, however, until he started a saloon in a room adjoining the grocery, and the proceeds of the store passed out of his hands over the gaming table.

At last their pleasant home was sold to replenish the grocery stock, and Mrs. Slater moved into a more humble house than she had occupied in her girlhood.

At the time when we resume our story the value of their stock, all told, was not more than three hundred dollars. However, Mr. Slater had just heard of a place in the country that seemed to him to hold out a promise of retrieving his fallen fortunes.

Accordingly he went out to see the place. It was a five roomed cottage, the front room of which had been built for, and used by, a former tenant as grocery store. It was situated about five miles from the city, and three miles from the village of Rochester; and to Mr. Slater's mind it afforded such a pleasing prospect of being able to sell "drinks" to travelers, that he leased the place, and in a few days moved his family into their new home.

There he also brought the remainder of the

grocery and saloon stock, and all day the little cottage resounded with the sound of hammer and saw, and the bustle of getting things "put to rights."

Eight years in passing leaves its impress on most faces, but a woeful change had come over the countenance of Mrs. Slater.

Her former beauty had been replaced by a weary, faded look, and on her face rested an expression of unutterable sadness.

Sorrow was now her daily portion, and the cup of bitterness of which she continually drank was made still more unpleasant by an accusing conscience.

After the labors of the day were about over, the children went out to take a look around their new home.

It was surrounded with much rural loveliness; and belonging to the cottage was an orchard and garden, and about six acres of meadow land which sloped down to the river; and the children were soon seated on the river bank observing the beauty of their surroundings with delight.

Archie was a child of whom a phrenologist would have said that the spiritual and intellectual predominated over the physical. Moreover he had inherited the timid disposition of his mother.

Edna closely resembled her father in her features, vigorous mind and resolute will. Her face, lovely now in its childish beauty, would develop

into yet greater beauty, for the poet soul now slumbered; by and by it would awake to life and glorify those perfect features.

A pleasing picture they formed as they sat there; a large dog was crouched at Edna's feet. This dog was exceedingly dear to the children, it being the only thing left them which belonged to their father. Ever and anon Edna would stoop to pat and caress him, then would pause and gaze around her in silence.

"Don't you like it?" Archie timidly inquired.

"I think it beautiful here, if it were not for that," she replied, pointing with intense scorn at the liquor sign which her step-father had swung out in front of the store.

"I hate it too," Archie replied; "but I am glad we live so near the schoolhouse; when school opens we will be away from home almost all day; and when we are studying we will forget about unpleasant things."

"Yes, you will," she replied bitterly; "when you have a book you forget everything else; but I do not. The pain and shame of our lives stay with me always; and often I lay awake at night, and cry for my old home and my mother as she used to be when we were little."

Archie made no reply, but turned away with a quivering sigh, that showed her words had found an echo in his own heart.

Just then Mrs. Slater appeared in the door-way and called in a fretful tone,

"Edna, Edna."

The children arose with a simultaneous sigh, being exceedingly weary from the unusual labors of the day.

As they entered the house, Mrs. Slater exclaimed,

"Edna, I want you to set the table. What do you mean by going off and leaving all the work for me to do when you know I am so tired I am just ready to drop?"

Edna made no reply, but immediately began

preparing the table for their evening meal.

"Tired, are you?" ejaculated Mr. Slater, coming into the room, "guess I had better fix you up a drink of something cheering."

His wife feebly remonstrated, but paying no attention to her words, he busied himself preparing a bowl of steaming punch; measuring the ingredients, and tasting it with the air of a connoisseur.

Pouring out a couple of glasses of the beverage he took one himself, and gave the other to Mrs. Slater, who drank it without further remonstrance.

Archie and Edna exchanged frightened glances. This was no unusual proceeding in their home; yet it was one which always filled them with alarm.

Mr. Slater was constantly tempting his wife to the use of intoxicants. Somehow her sad white face troubled his conscience, and he longed to make her a partaker of his sins, that he might escape the mute reproach of her troubled countenance.

The poor woman struggled against the temptation, for she felt that in yielding she was treading on dangerous ground; but she was timid and compliant by nature, and he strong and masterful, and his will always overbore hers; and more than once the children had been horrified to see their mother intoxicated.

When they were all seated at the table, Slater looked about him with a satisfied smile.

"Well, I think we have done the proper thing at last," he said. "We'll make money here, or I am greatly mistaken, and when Edna is grown she will be a fortune to us."

Mrs. Slater looked at him in surprise. "What do you mean?" she inquired.

"Just this," he replied; "those who drink will drink the oftener, for having the glasses passed to them by white, dimpled hands like these," (touching, as he spoke, one of Edna's hands).

She drew back her hand, saying indignantly,

"I would never do such a thing, never!"

"You won't?" he exclaimed in astonishment and rising anger.

"I will not," she replied haughtily, the indig-

nant flush mounting to her brow.

"I would die first;" adding, "My father would

never have allowed me to do such a thing if he had lived."

At this Mrs. Slater began to weep hysterically, as she always did when reference was made to her dead husband.

Slater arose from the table and passed out of the house, returning in a minute with a switch in his hand. Seizing Edna by the shoulder, he dragged her to the door, exclaiming with an oath,

"I will teach you that no one in my house shall

say 'I won't' to me."

"Oh, don't hurt her, please don't," Archie pleaded in frightened tones, struggling to free his sister.

With an angry exclamation, Slater gave the boy a violent push that sent him against the wall, pale and breathless. Then the angry man raised the rod and brought it down with terrible force upon the girl's white, quivering flesh.

Mrs. Slater screamed and stood helpless and irresolute, not knowing what to do. But there was a defender there who had so far been unnoticed.

The dog Leo had been attracted to the spot by their cries; and as Slater raised his arm to give the second blow, the dog sprang forward and caught the uplifted arm in his powerful jaws, tearing the man's sleeve, and lacerating the flesh in a terrible manner. In her fright Mrs. Slater caught Leo by the collar and vainly struggled to quiet the enraged animal.

With an ejaculation of pain and rage, Slater dropped the rod, and struck Edna to the ground with a cruel blow; then he turned and passed into the store room, his face quite white from pain and rage.

Archie assisted his sister to rise, and Mrs. Slater sank into a chair, and wept bitterly.

Presently Slater returned with a revolver in his hand—another moment and a report rang out on the air—a bullet pierced the heart of the faithful dog and her defender dropped dead at Edna's feet.

Two hours later Archie and Edna were weeping over the grave of their faithful dog. To some persons that scene would have provoked a smile; but their grief at the loss of Leo was indeed great, for he was the only thing that they possessed which had belonged to their father—the last link between them and the old happy life; and they wept over his grave with their hearts swelling with a bitter sense of injustice and loss.

CHAPTER II.

EVERT PLACE.

"Be what thou seemest, live thy creed, Hold up to earth the torch divine. Be what thou prayest to be made; Let the great Master's steps be thine."

And now we beg the reader to stray with us on the wings of fancy to the home of Dr. Evert, or Evert Place, as it was commonly called.

The house sat a little back from the main road, and was large and tasteful in architecture, and in appearance was decidedly suggestive of home comfort.

It was bounded on the north by sloping meadows; on the south by a large orchard and garden; and the out-buildings and stock that filled in the picture on the west, gave an air of thrift and plenty to the place; while the well-kept lawn, and abundance of rare flowers and shrubbery which beautified the grounds, gave evidence that wealth and taste were not wanting to make this home attractive.

A glance within the breakfast room reveals the master and mistress.

The doctor is reading the morning paper to his wife, who sits near him, her hands employed with some light needle work.

Mrs. Evert is a woman of perhaps thirty-five

years of age. Her face has lost some of its girlish fairness and bloom, but it is a true, lovable face, and seems oh, incomparably dearer to Dr. Evert than when, repeating the marriage vows, he placed his ring upon her finger, believing her the loveliest and best woman in the world.

The doctor is a large man, with benevolent face and kindly beaming dark eyes, which are often made darker by flashes of mirth.

Upon the veranda a little girl is playing; this is Flossie Evert, Dr. Evert's only child. She has inherited her father's dark eyes, sunny disposition, and quaint, mirthful ways.

Seven times have the roses bloomed, dropped, and drifted away, since Flossie came to be the sunshine of that home. She is an affectionate little creature, with a heart full of kindness for the whole world; but she is a very fountain of tenderness and joy to those she takes into her heart of hearts.

A fair and joyous child is Flossie Evert, and as she leaves the veranda now and trips down the walk with a quick, bird-like motion, the eye naturally follows her with pleased delight.

Going to the big front gate she unfastens it, and mounting it, swings back and forth upon it in a way peculiarly delightful to the heart of a child, and demoralizing to gates.

Presently her dark eyes descry a form coming leisurely down the road, which will evidently

prove a welcome visitor, for her eyes brighten, then her face dimples mischievously, and dismounting in great haste she catches up the corners of her tiny white apron, and going to a large rosebush near by, breaks off the fragrant blossoms and deposits them in the impromptu basket.

While she is thus engaged, we will observe the person who has attracted her attention.

He is a young man of about twenty-one years of age. He is of medium stature, and walks with grace and dignity. His eyes are dark brown, and his hair, which ripples away from a broad white brow, is a lighter brown, with gleams of gold where the sunlight falls upon it. His face has an expression of winning frankness, and there is a grave, wise sweetness in his smile. As he walks along, switching the hedge with a hazel rod, we observe that he is faultlessly attired, that his hands are white and slender, and his whole appearance is suggestive of the gentleman and scholar.

Having thus carefully described him, we will add that his name is Homer Atwood; he is the only son of a widowed mother, and is master of the fine estate lying south of the village of Rochester.

He had observed Flossie swinging on the gate and wondered at her sudden disappearance, for it was her custom to run to meet him.

However her presence is quickly revealed, for as

he opens the gate and enters the grounds, Flossie's fair head peeps from behind a rose bush, and one of her small hands throws a fragrant missile which strikes him in the face.

A look of surprise, instantly followed by one of mirth, flashes across his face, and he stoops to pick up the rose. Flossie renews the attack with much vigor, and the roses fall around him thick as leaves in Valembrosia.

By this time Homer has collected some of the fragrant ammunition and returns the fire, and the battle rages fiercely for awhile, amid peals of laughter, and shrieks from Flossie, which attract the attention of more than one observer.

Homer vigorously follows up the charge, and routs the enemy, whose ammunition gives out at this critical juncture, and she turns to flee; but he overtakes her, and holding both of her small hands in one of his, delivers a laughing reproof for the reception which she has given him.

Then tipping his hat back on his head, he stoops toward her saying, "Now for my kiss."

But Flossie draws back demurely, and says, "I am not going to kiss you any more."

"Why not?" says Homer, with a flash of surprise and amusement in his brown eyes.

She evidently enjoys his discomfiture, and replies with a coquettish air,

"I am getting too old to kiss men and boys."

"Too old?" he repeats. "Why, it is only three

days since I was here, and you kissed me then. You grow old very fast, Miss Flossie."

Her face dimples roguishly; but she feels that an explanation is in order, so she says,

"Cook saw me kiss you the other day, and teased me about it, and I'm not going to kiss you any more."

"Very well, then," he says with mock anger and regret, "if you think more of her words than you do of me, just keep your kisses, but remember it is very hard on me—that after bestowing kisses on me for lo! these many years, you should stop so suddenly."

But Flossie is in no mood for sentiment, and she pulls him by the hand saying, "O do come and see our little pigs."

"Pigs!" he echoes in mock surprise. "I talk of kisses, and you of pigs; I thought that you never looked at things 'common or unclean;' that your soul hovered all day over a bed of violets, and at night reveled in angelic realms."

Flossie is not slow to understand, and she laughs merrily, then says: "O, do come, they are so funny. Sometimes they play they are fighting and they do look so cute. The other day I was sitting on the fence watching them, and I laughed so much that I fell off and hurt my arm, and it bled awful hard."

"That was too bad," said Homer, checking a

rising smile, and endeavoring to throw an accent of sympathy into his tones.

"Yes," Flossie said, with a soft little sigh, "mama said she was not one bit sorry, for it served me right for not coming to dinner when I was called."

To please Flossie he went with her to see the pigs, but, much to her chagrin, they were quietly resting in the sunshine and could not be induced to play, so she and Homer returned to the house.

Judging by the warm reception which was accorded him, one would say that he was a frequent and welcome visitor.

After he was seated, Mrs. Evert said: "We were witnesses to the contest between you and Flossie, and were puzzled to know what became of you afterward."

"Flossie insisted that I should go to see the pigs," Homer explained. "She is a veritable Circe, and I consider myself fortunate to have escaped the transforming influence of her magic wand."

Flossie said, brightly, "I know that story; cousin Earl told me about it last summer."

Mrs. Evert laughingly added: "And if my memory serves me right, you quarreled with him for telling you."

Flossie tossed her head scornfully. "I don't care; I don't like fables anyhow. What's the use for him to tell me great, long stories, and then tell me

I must not believe them for they are not true?" Turning to Homer she added, "Earl is coming next week; ain't you glad?"

"Yes," said Dr. Evert, addressing Homer, "it will seem quite like old times to have you and Earl around again. These vacations are a blessing to us all. How much longer shall you attend school?"

"Two more years," Homer replied.

"Then you will come out a full-fledged minister, I suppose?" As Homer made no reply to this remark, Dr. Evert continued:

"It has always been a mystery to me that you should choose a profession at all. You are rich; why not spend your time looking after your estate and playing the country gentleman?"

Homer smilingly replied: "Like one of old I feel that 'Woe is me if I preach not the gospel.'"

Turning to Mrs. Evert he said: "I see that the family that has lately moved into the grocery by the river has a boy about the age of those in your Sunday-school class; perhaps you can induce him to become a member also."

"Do you suppose his parents would allow it?"
Mrs. Evert inquired. "They are running a saloon,
I have been told."

"Yes, that is true, but they might consent for him to attend, and if we can get a little of the leaven of God's word introduced there, a change may be wrought." Dr. Evert arose, saying: "You must excuse me, Homer, for leaving now; it is already later than I usually start on my daily rounds. I shall be back in time for luncheon, and hope to find you here at that time. Meanwhile you and Mrs. Evert can discuss this matter, and decide what to do. If the boy has any broken bones or other physical afflictions, perhaps I can lend you valuable aid; but I am not much on religion, you know; I let this little wife of mine do the religious for the whole family."

Homer earnestly replied, "But you ought to realize that your duty to God is a personal matter, and of great moment. No one—"

But Dr. Evert interposed with a smile and a wave of his hand.

"Don't, Homer, don't. I know how you feel. When I was studying for my profession I imagined that I could go forth and cure all the ailments of the people with surpassing skill, and how I did long for a patient! Doubtless you feel the same eagerness to test your skill in your profession that I did in mine, but I really must protest against being your first subject."

Homer would not be put off with a jest and a

smile, so he said very gravely:

"Dr. Evert, this is really a serious matter. If an earthly sovereign to whom you owed allegiance were to offer you his friendship and his love, with innumerable blessings, and you were to refuse his offer, and would not even acknowledge his existence, would you not expect to incur his wrath? Take heed that you offend not the King of kings. He unto whom belongeth all dominion, comes to you now in the attitude of a suppliant; remember that it will not always be so."

Dr. Evert hesitated a moment, then said: "Excuse me, Homer, for speaking lightly of your profession. While I try to do my duty bravely and well in my profession, I realize that there is a great difference between being a physician and a minister of the gospel. Good-bye now, I shall see you again soon." And with a bow and a smile to Mrs. Evert and Homer, and a kiss pressed upon the lips of his little daughter, Dr. Evert went away to his daily round of duties.

That afternoon Homer Atwood was driving through the village on his way to the city; and when passing near the depot was accosted by a friend and stopped for a few minutes' conversation.

Several persons stood upon the platform or lounged about the depot.

Standing apart from the others, and evidently waiting for the evening train, were a boy and girl, who instantly attracted Homer's attention. The persons referred to were Archie and Edna Carlisle, the former of whom Homer recognized as the boy of whom he had spoken to Mrs. Evert.

Edna was standing with her back toward Homer and he could not see her face, but he observed that

she was neatly though plainly dressed, and that a womanly dignity characterized her manner.

In a short time the train arrived, and bidding Archie a tearful good-bye, Edna took her seat in the car, and as the train moved swiftly away she leaned out of the window and tossed many kisses to her brother, who stood upon the platform.

Homer had a full view of Edna's face at this moment, and he caught his breath with an exclamation of surprise and pleasure.

When the train had completely passed from view, Archie turned away and began the long walk toward his home. In a few minutes Homer resumed his journey, and when but a short distance from the village overtook the boy, who was walking slowly and sadly along the dusty highway.

Never in all his life had Archie felt so utterly forlorn. Edna was the one gleam of sunshine in his clouded life, and now that she was gone, the way seemed inexpressibly dark and dreary.

Bravely struggling to keep back the tears, he walked slowly toward his joyless home.

He heard the sound of the passing vehicle, but did not look up until a kind voice accosted him, and proffered a seat in the buggy.

Looking up now, all of his native timidity disappeared beneath Homer's kindly beaming eyes, and Archie accepted the favor with a sense of pleasure.

There was a winning frankness in Homer's face

and smile; and forgetting the shortness of their acquaintance, Archie was soon talking with his new found friend in a manner devoid of all restraint.

He was so sad and lonely, so entirely companionless, what wonder if he found it a relief to speak of the desolateness of his existence, when sympathy was so freely offered him.

It did not take long for one of Homer's quick intuition to understand the sadness of the boy's life, or to see that he shrank with pain and humiliation from reference to his home or parents.

At last Homer said: "I foresee that we are going to be friends, so I must inquire your name?"

"It is Archie Carlisle."

"Then it is not your father who keeps the store?
That is not the name on the sign I think."

"No, he is my step-father. My father died eight years ago."

"Was your father a druggist?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah, I understand now why your sister's face impressed me so. She closely resembles her father. I saw him quite often when I was a boy. I had no personal acquaintance with him, but I am something of a physiognomist, and by my memory of him I should say that he was a father of whom you may well be proud."

Archie's face was glowing as he replied:

"Grandma says my father was loved and honored by all who knew him."

"Then cherish his memory," said Homer. "While 'honor and shame from no condition rise,' it is a blessed thing to be able to say, my father was a true and honorable man, and I will follow his example."

By this time they had reached Archie's home, and Homer bid the boy a kind good-bye, little realizing how much of brightness his sympathy had cast into a way which was all too deeply shadowed.

CHAPTER III.

"THE GRIEF UNSPOKEN WHISPERS THE O'ER-FRAUGHT HEART AND BIDS IT BREAK."

"Think ye the notes of holy songs,
On Milton's tuneful ear have died?
Think ye that Raphael's angel throng
Has vanished from his side?
The tissue of the life to be
We weave in colors all our own,
And in the field of destiny
We reap, as we have sown."

It has been wisely said, "The heart seldom weighs with conscious care a burden always borne." Archie had, in a measure, become accustomed to his joyless life, and when cheered by his sister's sympathy could bear the many ills of his existence with fortitude. But after her departure his life stretched before him like as an arid desert, in which no purling streams sparkled in the sunlight, no green shrub grew, no birds sang; only a measureless waste of sand, beat upon by a torrid sun which crushed out life and hope.

Mrs. Slater's mother had invited both the children to spend the summer with her, but only Edna was permitted to accept the invitation, as Archie's help was deemed too valuable to be spared.

A few acres of ground belonged to their little cottage, and to Archie was assigned the task of their cultivation. Early and late, during the long,

hot summer days, the boy might have been seen constantly laboring to accomplish the task which ill befitted one of his tender years, or delicate form.

Even wearisome toil may be cheerfully borne, if the tired worker may rest in the eventide, cheered by the sympathy of loved ones. But no kind voice or loving smile cheered Archie when his day's work was over; his life was desolate, companionless, and inexpressibly dreary.

We would not have the reader suppose that Mrs. Slater was habitually unkind to her children. She was naturally of an affectionate disposition, and under other circumstances would have been a devoted mother. Her marriage to Mr. Slater embittered her life. In a few short years she saw her home, and all the comforts which had surrounded her, disappear, only to be replaced by pinching poverty, and the echoes of ribald laughter from the revelers in the bar-room.

She saw her children poorly clad and unkindly treated by their step-father, and she shrank from their presence, for their sad faces seemed to look at her with mute reproach.

Her husband constantly tempted her with the steaming bowl, until she also acquired the evil thirst, and was glad to hide the one wild regret of her burdened heart in the partial oblivion supplied by intoxicants. The stimulant wrought upon her nervous system and made her very irritable.

When sober she never spoke unkindly to the children, but she was too weak and yielding by nature, to defend them from the cruel blows which her brutul husband often inflicted upon them; and though she wept in secret over their abuse, she never spoke to them of the matter, or evinced her sympathy in any manner, for at such times her heart was wild with pain and regret, and she could not bear to meet their innocent eyes which seemed to silently upbraid her for the sorrow which she had brought upon them.

So more and more she yielded to the influence of the intoxicating glass; and her perceptive faculties became numb, and her mother love grew cold, as she glided down the dark road of degradation and despair.

At last a ray of brightness shone athwart Archie's path; Mr. Slater yielded an ungracious consent to the oft-repeated solicitations of Homer Atwood, and permitted Archie to attend the Sunday-school which was held in the little white school house near his home.

He became a member of Mrs. Evert's class, and she and Homer took such a genuine interest in the boy, that he was made to feel that some one cared for him, and life assumed a less sombre hue.

Mrs. Evert soon felt a deep interest in Archie; he seemed so sad for one so young, and coupled with his air of intelligence was so much gentle ness and timidity, that she longed to take the forlorn child to her kind heart, and shield him from the storms of life.

She spoke of him so often that she finally enlisted the sympathies of her husband in Archie's behalf; and they decided that if they could gain the consent of the boy's parents, he should find a peaceful home at Evert Place, and would at least be provided with the means of obtaining a good education.

Believing that Mrs. Slater would be glad to accept such advantages for her son, Dr. Evert called upon her, and in a very kind spirit, unfolded to her the object of his visit. She was partially intoxicated, and the offer seemed to her almost like an insult. She so indignantly spurned the proposition that Dr. Evert became seriously offended and went home in a state of great indignation, and told Mrs. Evert that it would be many a day before she would get him to go on such a fool's errand again; for his part he was glad they were not permitted to take the boy, for he must be a young villain, after having lived so long in such a hornet's nest.

Mrs. Evert was deeply grieved at the result of the Doctor's visit, especially when, as time passed on, she found that Archie was no longer permitted to attend Sunday-school. She was cut off from all communication with him, but Homer Atwood often sought the boy out when he was working in the field, and manifested an earnest desire to make his life more pleasant. Yet it was very little that any one could do. From the manner in which Dr. Evert's offer had been resented, Homer felt sure that any pecuniary benefits which might be bestowed upon the boy would incur the displeasure of his parents, even if Archie himself would accept them, which seemed doubtful, as he was very sensitive, and seemed reluctant to accept a favor, though it were proffered in the most delicate manner. At last Homer's vacation drew to a close; before leaving, however, he had a long talk with Archie, who was deeply grieved that he must give up his one friend.

Taking from his pocket a little red Bible, Homer presented it to Archie, saying: "I am sorry to part from you, Archie, but the friendships of earth are constantly darkened by the cloud of separation. If you will believe and obey the teachings of this book you will gain the friendship of One from whom nothing can separate you. One who in joy or sorrow, life or death, will be constantly beside you to comfort you with his love and sympathy."

Then with a fervent clasp of the hand and a whispered "God bless you," Homer turned away and soon passed out of sight.

With heaving bosom and tear-dimmed eyes Archie opened the book which had been his friend's parting gift.

On the fly-leaf was written, in a clear round hand,

"Presented to Archie Carlisle, By Homer Atwood,"

and beneath were these words:

- "This little book I'd rather own Than all the gold and gems
 That e'er in monarch's crown were seen,
 Than all their diadems.
- "Nay, were the vast ocean a crystal,
 This earth a golden ball,
 And diamonds all the stars of night,
 This book were worth them all."

A few days later Archie's heart was made glad by his sister's return. Even Mrs, Slater's beclouded brain felt the brightening influence of the girl's presence, and gladly welcomed her back to their miserable home.

While absent, Edna had been well supplied with clothing by her grandmother's kindly hand. Mrs. Slater's mother was a widow, and her only means of support was the rent of a few rooms which she let to lodgers; but the lonely woman had taken great pleasure in using her scanty hoards to supply her lovely grandchild with bright, warm dresses.

Each day the girl grew more beautiful; and it was with a feeling of pardonable pride in his lovely sister, that Archie walked by her side to the school house the first day of the term.

Their hearts were beating high with hope, for they had a natural craving for learning; and in their discussions of the subject had decided that through increase of knowledge a path would open up to them out of the shame and degradation of their present surroundings.

When recess came, and Archie and Edna went into the play ground, they were received very unkindly by the other scholars, who had often heard their parents speak in tones of condemnation of the saloon keeper and his family, and the children were not disposed to treat Archie and Edna as their equals.

When Archie timidly approached a group of boys, he was greeted with the cry of "Whiskey! Whiskey!" and unkind remarks about his well worn clothes, which caused the blood to rush painfully into his face. A less sensitive boy would, perhaps, have braved it out, and might eventually have won their friendship and respect. But Archie was glad to retreat into the school-room, to be free from their scornful faces and taunting voices.

Edna fared better among the girls, if to represent vacancy be considered better. In a few minutes, with tearful eyes and quivering lips, she followed her brother into the school-room, and never again did they try to pass the invisible boundary which separated them from other children.

The sins of the father had been visited upon the

children, and the parents eating sour grapes had put the children's teeth on edge.

In the early part of the winter Mrs. Evert went to visit some relatives, and before leaving she begged her husband to watch over Archie during her absence, and improve every opportunity to contribute to the boy's comfort and happiness.

The unkind reception which Dr. Evert's previous overture had met with did not create in his mind a desire to visit the boy's home again, and as they had never met, the matter gradually faded away from the doctor's memory.

The winter was one of severe cold, and Archie was sadly in need of clothing to protect him from the rude blasts; his shoes were so much worn that his stockingless feet protruded through the holes; and one morning he went to school through a deep snow on which a hard crust had formed, and his poor, frost-bitten feet were cut by the icy snow, until he might have been tracked by the blood which flowed from the wounds. (Reader, this is no fancy sketch; the writer of this saw his bleeding feet and the blood-stained snow where he had trod).

The poor boy would have been glad to hide his misery from his school-fellows, but they did not laugh now; this was external suffering, and they began to pity him.

They had not meant to be unkind, but they did

not stop to think that it was through no fault of his that he was obliged to dress so poorly.

About this time Dr. Evert received a letter from his wife in which she inquired about Archie, and begged her husband to do all he could to contribute to the poor child's happiness.

The doctor had seldom thought of the boy since Mrs. Evert left, but being reminded now he called one day at Archie's home and found him very ill. He had taken a severe cold and was suffering very much with sore throat. Nothing had been done to relieve him, for Edna knew nothing of nursing the sick, and Mrs. Slater and her husband were both intoxicated.

Dr. Evert was very angry when he saw how the boy had been mistreated. While he respected the moderate drinker, he despised a drunkard, and a drunken woman seemed to him the most repulsive sight on earth.

Dr. Evert called on Archie every day until he recovered. He also gave the boy a warm suit of clothes, and saw that he was well provided for in every respect against the inclemencies of the winter. But, alas! the seeds of disease which had been sown in his system by exposure, were too deeply rooted to be easily eradicated.

Early in the spring Mrs. Evert returned home; and it was with eyes full of unshed tears that she looked at the boy. He seemed but a shadow of

the Archie she had bidden good-bye a few months before.

Dr. Evert told his wife of the sufferings of the boy during the winter, and her heart ached at the recital all the more because she knew it was only one instance of cruelty out of thousands, caused by intemperance.

With the coming of the warm spring weather, Archie experienced a great weariness of body, and dizzy headaches, which boded no good. At last he was taken ill at school, and was obliged to go home. He had a severe chill; so severe, indeed, that it would have struck terror to the heart of a loving mother; but Mrs. Slater's beclouded brain scarcely comprehended that the child was ill.

Edna had obtained the teacher's permission to accompany her brother home, and all day she sat beside him, pale and frightened at his suffering. When his fever came on and he raved in delirium, the poor girl knew not what to do; but she staid faithfully beside him all night, bathing his fevered brow; aye, and weeping too, because he had no loving mother to care for him.

The next day Archie was unable to attend school, and his inability to do so grieved him deeply; for it was nearing the end of the term, and he had every prospect of winning a valuable prize which had been offered.

As he was about to retire in the evening, his step-father said to him:

"Your mother and I are going to town in the morning to buy goods to replenish the stock, and you will have to stay at home and take charge of the store in our absence."

The boy gave one weary, hunted look, and then said quietly:

"I will stay; but you must not expect me to wait on customers at the bar."

"Why not?" Mr. Slater inquired, with rising anger.

"Because I believe it is a sin," said Archie bravely.

The curses that fell from the man's lips made the boy shudder; but with a grand heroism he answered:

"I will not do what I believe is a sin."

The brutal man snatched a beer glass and threw it at Archie; fortunately for the boy, for once the man was so drunk that he could not throw straight and the result was a crashing of crystal close to the boy's head.

"Now go to bed," shouted the angry man. "Tomorrow you'll do as I bid you or I'll make you wish you were dead."

Archie crept away to bed, but not to sleep. Yet he did not feel afraid; all sense of fear seemed dead in him; everything appeared confused and dim except his faith in Christ, and hope of Heaven.

CHAPTER IV.

"TO LIVE IN HEARTS WE LEAVE BEHIND IS NOT TO DIE."

"Oh! many are the mansions there, But not in one hath grief a share."

Archie spent a sleepless night, for with such an aching head and sorrowful heart, to repose seemed impossible.

At last in the gray dawn of the morning he fell asleep, murmuring softly: "Though I walk through the valley and shadow of death Thou wilt be with me."

Ah, dear child, it is well that you can feel the presence of the orphan's God. No other heart is throbbing in sympathy with your sufferings. Your mother, who should be bending over your pillow in an agony of love and grief, is lying yonder in a drunken slumber, alike careless and unconscious of her child's pain and sorrow. Archie had not slept long when he was rudely awakened by his step-father, who shook him roughly and shouted:

"Get up, you lazy bones. The cow has gone off, and you'll have to hunt her up. Come back as quick as you can, for we are going to town, and you'll have to tend store. And mark my

words, if you don't sell the customers whatever they want, I'll half kill you!"

He went away muttering curses; and Archie slowly arose from the bed.

He had a blinding pain in his head, and his limbs trembled and felt so weak that he could hardly stand. With trembling fingers he dressed himself, wondering in a dim, unreasoning way, if his step-father really believed he could walk.

Edna had not awakened yet. As Archie passed through the dining-room his mother was preparing the table for their morning meal.

She looked at him in surprise, saying, "Archie, are you sick?"

That kindly inquiry touched the heart of the desolate child, and struggling to repress his tears, he bowed his head, unable to control his voice.

There was a piteous, appealing look in his eyes that roused her mother love, and she resolved to shield him from the cruelty of her husband. Then the old timidity overcame her. What could she do? He was stronger than she, and nothing but brute force could restrain him from having his own way. Any interference that she could offer would only serve to subject the child to further abuse.

As these thoughts passed rapidly through her mind, she passed her arm caressingly around the boy, saying gently:

"I am sorry, dear. I would help you if I could; but I think that you will feel better when you get out into the fresh air."

Archie crept out of the house, sobbing piteously. He hardly knew where he was going, but with great suffering and staggering with weakness, he toiled on until he was about a mile from home; then he began to chill. His pain overcame his timidity, and seeing a little cottage near by, he went to the door and begged to be allowed to sit by the fire.

Mrs Lawrence—the good woman of the house—was frightened by the blue, pinched look of the boy's face, and his evident suffering.

She wrapped him in blankets, and seated him in an easy chair by the kitchen fire; doing everything she could think of to relieve him.

The fire felt so good, and her sympathy seemed so sweet, but he dared not sit long.

"Oh, I must go and look for the cow," he wailed.

"No, you'll not!" said the little woman decidedly. "You'll stay right where you are until my husband comes home at noon, and he will take you home to your mother."

A wailing sound broke from the boy's lips. Other children had mothers to take care of them when they were sick, but he was worse than motherless. Thinking thus bitterly he began to sob in such a piteous manner, that Mrs. Lawrence wept

in sympathy with him, although she did not know the true cause of his grief.

In a short time he was suffering with a raging fever, and when they put him in the carriage to take him home he seemed unconscious of his surroundings.

Mr. Slater and his wife had gone to town, leaving Edna in charge, with the expectation that Archie would speedily return.

When Mr. Lawrence arrived with the sick boy and found that there was no one at home capable of taking care of the sufferer, he immediately went for Dr. Evert.

The doctor was absent, and on learning who the sick person was, Mrs. Evert instructed the servant to tell Dr. Evert as soon as he returned home, and in a short time she was at the bedside of the sick boy.

Archie's mind was wandering and he did not recognize Mrs. Evert, but kept talking all the time in a troubled way, sometimes imploring some one not to hurt him, and again shrieking in terror from an imaginary blow.

In a short time Dr. Evert arrived, and after making an examination, he looked at his weeping wife and said:

"Do not grieve so, Nellie; your little friend will soon be beyond all suffering. He has had a congestive chill; all that I can now do is to deaden the pain." Shortly after taking the medicine Archie became more quiet, and finally recognized Mrs. Evert.

"Oh, Wilfred!" she joyfully exclaimed, "I believe that you are mistaken. See, he seems better."

"Yes, dear, he is easier," said the doctor gently. "However, I do not believe that he has an hour to live."

Mrs. Evert shrank as if from a blow; then she said faintly, "He should know this."

Approaching the bed and laying her cool hand upon the boy's forehead, she said: "Archie, you are not afraid to die?"

An expression of intense agony swept over his face, and his eyes rested upon his sister with a look of unutterable sorrow, as thoughts of love, and fear, and buried hopes swept through his mind.

In a feeble voice he said: "I wanted to live to take Edna away from here. I thought that when we grew older we could go away and be so happy together."

"Leave her with the God of the fatherless," said Mrs. Evert. He never yet failed those who put their trust in him, and he will raise up friends for your sister. Could you trust her to me, Archie?"

A look of intense joy swept across his face, and he said: "It would not be so hard to die if I knew that she will be happy."

"Do not leave me, Archie!" Edna cried in wild

alarm, as she kissed the dear face upon which death was fast leaving its impress. "Don't leave me, I can never be happy without you."

A spasm of anguish passed over his face, and he was silent for a moment, then he said: "Oh, it is so hard to die and leave you; but I will give you my Bible; if you will live as it teaches we will be happy together yet."

He closed his eyes and his breath came faintly.

"Almost gone," said Dr. Evert.

Archie opened his eyes and said: "Tell mother I won the prize."

They thought his mind wandered, but he added: "Not the school prize—the other one—the crown of life."

Looking at Mrs. Evert, he said faintly, "Sing—'When—Jesus—comes." The words died away in a whisper.

She stooped and kissed him, then with the tears silently flowing down her cheeks, [she sang the words that were so precious to him. So with the last look resting on the beloved face, and the music of the dear voice in his ears, his freed spirit took its flight.

Dr. Evert was deeply affected. He had witnessed many death scenes, but nothing had ever touched his feelings so before.

With tearful eyes he composed the form of the dead. This sad office had scarcely been performed when the rumble of wheels was heard.

It stopped at the door; then they heard Mr. Slater and his wife engaged in angry dispute.

Stepping softly across the room, Dr. Evert entered the store room to meet Mrs. Slater. A look of alarm passed over her face when she saw him.

He gave her a chair, saying:

"Sit down a moment, Mrs. Slater, I have something to say to you."

She sat down, but kept looking at him in a won-dering way.

Dr. Evert inquired: "Did you know when you left this morning that Archie was very sick?"

Her face grew pale, and she replied: "No, I knew he was not well, but thought his indisposition nothing more serious than a headache, which would soon wear off. My husband sent Archie on an errand. I dared not interfere; I would only have brought more trouble on the child by so doing."

Then looking up at Dr. Evert's stern, sad face, she seemed to realize for the first time that something alarming had occurred.

She sprang up exclaiming, "Do you mean that anything serious has happened to my child?"

Dr. Evert silently pointed to the room where the dead boy lay, so cold and quiet, "after life's fitful fever."

She opened the door and looked in.

Edna was sobbing on Mrs. Evert's bosom. Rush-

ing to the side of the dead boy, Mrs. Slater put her hand upon his brow, as though unwilling to trust the evidence of sight. The cold, dead face, seemed to strike a chill to her heart, and throwing up her arms, with a low cry of horror, she fell heavily to the floor.

* * * * * * * *

And now, we must ask our readers to look with us upon a very different scene.

Upon the veranda of a beautiful house, a lady and little girl are seated. Both are dressed in white, and between them is a basket of flowers from which, from time to time, the little girl selects one and gives it to the lady, who weaves it into the wreath which she is making.

The persons are Mrs. Evert and Flossie, and the wreath is a floral tribute to be laid on Archie's coffin.

Mrs. Evert's fair face wore an expression of pensive sadness. Her husband stood awhile, quietly regarding them; finally he came and seated himself beside them, saying:

"Why do you take the boy's death so to heart, Nellie? He is better off."

She glanced at him quickly, and replied:

"That is true. Nevertheless, he might have had a happy home and become a good and useful man, if the evil of intemperance had not cheated

him of his birthright. Is it not your opinion that he would be alive now if he had been properly cared for?"

"Certainly. His system became debilitated by exposure last winter, and this sickness followed as a natural result. No medical aid was called, and now he is lying there, cold and silent; a martyr to parental 'neglect."

"Caused by intemperance," Mrs. Evert added.

"His mother is naturally an intelligent and kindly woman; but, alas! intemperance steals away the best qualities of head and heart."

Dr. Evert replied, "Well, Nellie, I begin to regard intemperance much as you do. And I promise you that I will never again drink anything which intoxicates. And I will place a monument at Archie's grave, partly to his memory, and also as a reminder of my resolution."

Mrs. Evert arose,—tears were streaming down her cheeks.

"Oh! Wilfred," she exclaimed, "I am so glad! But do not stop there. 'The arm of flesh will fail you.' Do not trust it. Confess the Savior, and put him on, in his own appointed way. Then you have the promise that your prayers will be answered, and he will uphold you in time of trial and temptation; and you 'shall come off conqueror, and more than conqueror, through him that loved us, and gave himself for us.'"

"Heaven bless you, darling," said Dr. Evert,

with visible emotion. "You shall worry no more about me. I will accept God's offer of love and mercy ere it is everlastingly too late."

* * * * * * *

That afternoon, as the sun was sinking in the west, the body of Archie Carlisle was laid in the grave.

"To die is but landing on some silent shore, Where billows never break, nor tempests roar, Ere well we feel the friendly stroke, 'tis o'er."

CHAPTER V.

A CHANGE FOR EDNA.

Summer in the country. Who that has ever enjoyed it can forget it? Oh, how our heart stirs and brings back the glad feelings of our childhood, as we remember the scenes of long ago, and the dear old highway along which, with a lunch basket on our arm, we trudged to school, singing as we went; pausing ever and anon to look for a bird's nest in the hedge-row, or to gather the wild roses that grew by the roadside. Ah, happy the childhood that is spent among such pure and lovely scenes.

Along this road a carriage is rapidly whirling; in it is seated a lady, dressed in silver grey, with a cluster of roses at her throat. Her eyes are taking in every beauty of scene, and her sweet face tells of a soul at peace with God and man.

It was the morning succeeding the burial of Archie. Mrs. Evert was going to visit his mother, and, if possible, induce her to give Edna into her care.

Of the little girl she had seen very little, but her lovely, intelligent face, and almost womanly sweetness of manner, had made a lasting impression on Mrs. Evert's kind heart; and she shuddered when she thought what was likely to be the fate of the beautiful girl if reared among such degrading surroundings.

"Oh, God!" she prayed, "incline the heart of this mother, that I may be permitted to train this lovely girl in ways of peace and holiness."

Having arrived at her destination, she passed through a side gate, around to the rear of the building, where she knew the living rooms of the family were situated.

As she approached the door, she saw Mrs. Slater lying on a bed in the room, her sad face plainly showing how remorse was gnawing at her heart. Edna was standing at her mother's bedside, pleading with her to take some nourishment.

On seeing their visitor Mrs. Slater burst into tears.

"You have been as God's good angel to us," she said, "and I would not heed you. If I had given my boy into your care, doubtless he would have grown up to an honorable manhood, and would have taken Edna and me away from this place of shame and degradation. But now he is dead! Oh! it is horrible! horrible! It seems to me sometimes that I shall go wild when I try to realize what has occurred.

"I know that his life was lost through my neglect. I know that I have become lower than the beasts of the field, for they care for their young; and I—Oh, God! to think that I promised

their dying father that I would be kind to his children."

The miserable woman was shaken from head to foot by the intensity of her emotion, and believing that it would be a relief to her to speak of her past life, Mrs. Evert said: "Is it long since their father died? Tell me something of your former life."

After a moment's silence, Mrs. Slater replied:

"I will, but mine is not an uncommon story. My early years, as far as I remember, were full of sunshine. I was the only child of my parents, who, with loving zeal, shielded me from all the storms of life. When I was about fifteen years old my father died, leaving mother and me alone in the world, with no possessions beside the little cottage we called home. Being thrown upon our own resources to earn a living, mother took in fine needle-work, and I was apprenticed to a dressmaker. I soon mastered the art, for which I had a natural liking; and as I was strong and healthy, I felt it no hardship to work for my living. Oh, life was so different then, before I knew what sin and sorrow meant!

"When I was eighteen years old, I made the acquaintance of Oscar Carlisle. He was so noble and true, he soon won my love. Edna looks like him; she has the same fair complexion, the same dark blue eyes and jet black hair. He was not what the world calls rich, but he was engaged in

a prosperous mercantile business, and at our marriage installed me as mistress of a beautiful little home which was overshadowed by no cloud until the time of his sickness and death. Oh, he was so noble, so truly great in mind and heart, and withal so gentle and loving, and I wonder now how it is possible, that after having been loved by him, I could sink as low as I have since his death." The poor woman paused, overcome by painful memories.

Mr. Slater had been drinking and playing cards with a man in an adjoining room; and now their voices were raised in angry altercation.

Mrs. Evert looked at Edna. The girlish face which she had remarked at the funeral as being so white and cold was flushed now, and there was a shimmer of tears on her long black lashes.

She appeared quite unconscious of the sounds coming from the saloon, but listened with her soul in her eyes, while her mother spoke of the father whom she could scarcely remember.

Presently Mrs. Slater resumed, in a low tone: "He was a true Christian, and he used to plead with me to become one, but I would not. When he was dying he said to me, 'Dear little wife, I shall leave you now, never to return; but I charge you—meet me in Heaven, bringing my children with you.' And I promised. Oh! how have I kept that promise!

"After his death I sold his business and con-

tinued to live in our little home. In about two years I was married to Mr. Slater. He was a fine looking man then; I was deceived as to his real character, and that disappointment has embittered my whole life. In a few years we were reduced to our present condition of poverty, and overcome with grief, I began trying to drown my trouble in drink. Well, I went from bad to worse, until I became what you see me now, the most miserable woman on the face of the earth, a mother whose culpable carelessness has occasioned the death of her child."

Sitting up in bed and raising an arm, Mrs. Slater exclaimed:

"Bear witness that I swear before God never tolet another drop of the accursed poison pass between my lips."

Then casting her arms about Edna, she exclaimed, with tears streaming down her cheeks, "Oh, my darling! my darling! How am I to raise you up to be a good, true woman, as your father wished, if you remain in such a place as this? Oh, Oscar! why did you die and leave us to such a fate?"

The wretched woman wept until she was utterly exhausted; and Mrs. Evert, with a heart full of pity for the grief-stricken creature, did all she could to comfort her. Finally Mrs. Evert said:

"Could you trust your child to me? I would care for her precisely as if she were my own

daughter; and I feel sure that she would grow up a good and noble woman."

At first Mrs. Slater seemed pleased with the

proposition. Then her pale lips moaned:

"To part with both my children at one stroke! Oh, God! 'my punishment is greater than I can bear!' Oh, I can not do it!"

Mrs. Evert said: "Think well before you refuse. Edna will be near you, where you can see her often; and remember, if you had let me have Archie you would have no cause for remorse now."

It seemed almost cruel to say this to the griefstricken woman, but Mrs. Evert felt as if she were striving for the soul of the beautiful girl who stood between them, her eyes hidden by long black lashes, and her face as white as snow.

Sighing heavily, Mrs. Slater said: "What do you say, Edna? Will you go to live with Mrs. Evert?"

The girl did not look up, but replied in a faltering voice:

"It shall be as you wish, Mother."

At that moment Mr. Slater staggered into the apartment, with an oath upon his lips. He had evidently been listening to their conversation.

Uttering a terrible oath, he said: "No, you will not give her up. I intend she shall be bar-maid when she gets a little older. The girl is a beauty, and her pretty face will draw lots of custom."

Mrs. Evert arose, trembling with indignation.

"Do you not realize, sir," she exclaimed, "that the God in whom this child's father trusted will mete out to you a swift and terrible punishment if you do this thing?"

He cowered a moment beneath the wrath of her flashing eyes and indignant face. Then with drunken brutality he strode across the room, and appeared about to strike her, but was held in check by her fearless mien.

"Get out of this house!" he shouted, "and never set your foot in here again, or it will be the worse for you!"

"I will go," she said; "you certainly have the right to order whom you will out of your house. But I warn you, be careful how you treat this child, for the day will soon come when you shall be called upon to give an account of your actions, to the God of heaven and earth."

As Mrs. Evert was entering her carriage to return home, Edna came running out, and said in a low tone:

"Mother bade me say to you that she will give you an answer to-morrow."

Having delivered her message, she was returning with fleet footsteps to the house, but was intercepted by Slater, who had staggered out after her. With an angry ejaculation he struck her a violent blow in the face, which sent her reeling against the building.

With a piercing scream Mrs. Slater bounded

from the bed, and was soon standing between the drunken man and her child, receiving blows which would otherwise have fallen upon the tender flesh of the little girl.

Mrs. Evert looked helplessly up the road and saw a farmer coming leisurely along. She hastened to meet him, and after imploring him to go to Mrs. Slater's assistance, she drove home as fast as possible, and arrived there in an almost fainting condition, frightening the servants terribly by her white face and trembling form. Hers was a nature strong to endure where she could render assistance, but unable to stand helplessly by and see others suffer.

The next day was passed in considerable anxiety by Mrs. Evert. She had been anxious before to receive the little girl into her care, because she felt that by so doing she would render God service, but now, added to that interest, was the tender sympathy she felt for the lovely child who had borne all so uncomplainingly.

As the day began to wear away Mrs. Evert grew impatient, as no word was received concerning the subject uppermost in her thoughts.

She could not sit quietly indoors, so she began to pace restlessly back and forth upon the long veranda, scanning with eager eyes the direction from which the expected message should come.

At last, as the sun was declining, a woman's figure was seen wearily toiling up the hill toward the

house. It needed no second glance from Mrs. Evert to assure her it was Mrs. Slater, although she was much changed in appearance from what she had been a week previously.

Her intemperate habits had been wearing upon her system all spring. Then came the shock of Archie's death, and the deep remorse which followed. She had stopped the use of her accustomed stimulant, and the blows she had yesterday received from the hand of her brutal husband, falling upon her already weakened form, were almost more than she could endure and live.

The ready tears sprang to Mrs. Evert's eyes as she received her guest, and noticed her weakened step and quivering form.

Mrs. Slater sank into the easy chair offered her, with the weary air of one who has taxed her endurance to the utmost limit.

After expressing her sympathy in a few well chosen words, Mrs. Evert silently waited for Mrs. Slater to announce her decision.

This she seemed in no haste to do, but let her glance wander aimlessly around the luxuriously furnished apartment.

Opening on the south was a conservatory filled with the rare plants of many climes; and through the open window she could see a fountain sending forth its coolness amid a wilderness of flowers, while the air was sweet with the perfume of heliotropes and roses.

It needed but this vision of peace and beauty to confirm the poor mother in the sacrifice which she was about to make. She contrasted in her mind this place, which her daughter might enjoy, with the only home that she could now offer her, and a low wail of agony broke from her lips.

Mrs. Slater had been a very devoted mother until she took to drink; and since Archie's death it seemed that a fresh fountain of mother-love had welled forth in her heart; and she felt that death to herself would be preferable to giving up her only child. But it must be done. It was the forfeit she must pay for her marriage to a drunkard.

Home, reputation, and friends, all gone. One child food for the dust and worms, and the other given to the care of strangers.

With tears stealing down her cheeks, she turned to Mrs. Evert, saying:

"I give my daughter into your keeping; but oh, remember, she is the dearest treasure a miserable mother ever yielded up."

Mrs. Evert's tears were flowing in sympathy, as she replied:

"God witness between you and me that I will be faithful to the trust. All that love and wealth can do to minister to Edna's happiness shall be freely given her; and God helping me, I will guide her in the right path, that she may meet her father in the realms of bliss."

At the mention of her dead husband Mrs. Slater wrung her hands with a low, wailing cry.

"Oh, Oscar, shall I never see you again? Lover and husband in the happy years that are gone, what would you say to me? Would you accuse me of killing your child?"

Turning to Mrs. Evert she exclaimed:

"Would God forgive my sins now? May I hope to be forgiven?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Evert. "If you repent, God will cast your sins behind his back. 'Though they were as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow.' Don't you know the father met the prodigal son while he was yet a great way off?"

"Yes," Mrs. Slater replied, despondently. "But he had only deserted the father's house, his sins

were not so great as mine."

Mrs. Evert said: "Would you limit the mercy of God? What saith the Scriptures? 'He is able to save to the uttermost all who call upon him.' O, my friend, would you not like to begin life anew, free from sin? Then bow in obedience to the commands of God, and you shall be as free from sin as a little child. God will blot out your sins from the book of his remembrance."

Mrs. Slater was silent for some time. At last she said: "I will speak with you upon the subject again soon; but I must go now. I fear my husband will notice my absence. I had to watch my opportunity to come away without his observing

me. I desire that you should legally adopt Edna, so she will be placed entirely beyond his control. He will go to town to-morrow; come while he is gone."

She had risen to her feet while speaking, but sank back, pale and trembling.

Mrs. Evert touched a bell, a servant answered it. "Tell John to bring round the carriage and take Mrs. Slater home," she said.

Mrs. Slater arose in alarm. "O, no!" she exclaimed; "it would never do. My husband would know I had been here, and would surmise the object of my visit."

"Well," said Mrs. Evert, "it is getting so late, John can take you almost home without being seen. You are too weak and ill to walk that distance. O, I wish the doctor were here, he would give you something to help you."

Presently Mrs. Slater entered the carriage, and with a whispered "God bless you," from Mrs. Evert, was taken back home—if that place can be called home from whence everything has flown which makes life desirable, leaving in its place poverty, sorrow and shame.

CHAPTER VI.

FLOSSIE'S VIOLET.

"O, dear! O, dear! will they never come?" Flossie Evert exclaimed fretfully.

The cook looked up from her work, saying soothingly: "Ah, now Flossie, take it easy. Your mother said they would not be home before evening. And you've been watching for them for the last two hours, and I know it will be a good long hour yet before they come."

"Maybe it will," Flossie answered, with a sigh; "but I tell you, Mary Haggerty, you would be as anxious as I am, if you were a little girl like me, and your papa and mamma had gone to get a little cousin to be your very own. Quite like she was my sister, papa said, only they will adopt her as a niece because her mamma is living.

"Well, I hope she is pretty," said Flossie, as she flitted from the room; "I know I shall not like her if she isn't. When I asked mamma, she only laughed and said, 'Wait and see.'"

Mary looked after the vanishing form of the little girl with a smile, then turning, she said to the house-maid:

"Now, that is just like Flossie. I never saw anyone so fond of beauty as she is."

"I think we ought to be going now," said Lucy.

"Mrs. Evert told me to take Flossie away, so she will not be here when they come home."

"I wonder what that is for?" said Mary.

"I don't know. But she has a good reason for it, I warrant."

"Well, you'll have a good time getting Flossie to go. She is in a fever about that girl. But it is my opinion they'll be sorry for this day's work. The idea of taking a girl from a place like that, and—"

"Hush," said Lucy. "Here comes Flossie." Turning to the little girl, she said:

"Get ready for a walk, Flossie. Your mother said we must take some fruit and jelly to Mrs. Miller this afternoon."

"O, I don't want to go," said the little girl, pettishly.

Mary affected to be very much surprised. "I thought you were always glad to visit the poor, sick folks; besides, your mother said for you to go."

"Well, I will go," said Flossie, accepting her duty with a cheerful air; and I will take her some of those tube-roses she is so fond of."

She skipped away, returning presently with a large bouquet; and her dark eyes were sparkling with pleasure, as she thought how pleased the sick woman would be to receive it.

"There now, Lucy Jefferies, did you ever see

anything prettier than that?" Flossie inquired, looking with delight at her bouquet.

Lucy smilingly replied, "Nothing but your own sweet face, Flossie."

"Ah, there you are at it again; and mamma said you must not flatter me, because it will spoil me and make me vain."

This was said with a half-petulant, wholly pleased air, which caused both the women to laugh.

"Well, I won't flatter you then," said Lucy, "but I couldn't help saying what I did. Your eyes shine like stars, your cheeks look like roses, and your hair looks—like—"

"What?" said Flossie, sharply, "Tow? Papa calls me 'tow head' sometimes, and I don't like it."

"O, no, Flossie, not like tow. It is too fine and yellow to be called tow."

Flossie and Lucy had scarcely gone out of sight when the carriage came slowly up the drive, bearing to that home a new inmate, whether for joy or sorrow, happiness or misery—who can tell?

Flossie Evert was instinctively drawn toward the beautiful, and shrank from everything coarse and ugly; and as Mrs. Evert was very anxious that Edna should make a good first impression on Flossie (and knowing that the way to the heart of little beauty-loving Flossie was through her eye), had ordered the servant to take the little girl

away, so that she should not see Edna until she was attired in one of the pretty dresses which Mrs. Evert had purchased that day.

"Welcome home, dear child," she said to Edna at the door. "May God bless you in your new home. I want you to be happy, and feel that you have as much right here as if you were my own daughter. Now I will show you to your room," she added, leading the way up the broad stairs, and entering a daintily furnished room which seemed a very bower of beauty to the child so inured to poverty.

With a view to pleasing Flossie, Mrs. Evert selected a blue muslin from among the dresses which she had bought for Edna, and expressed a desire that it should form a part of her attire that evening.

Coming into the room an hour later, she found Edna neatly dressed, and looking so fair and sweet, that she stooped and kissed her, saying:

"You look very well, my dear. Now I will take you down and introduce you to my daughter."

Flossie had just returned, and was out on the veranda with her father, asking him so many questions all in a breath that he laughingly bade her put them one at a time, if she wished to be answered.

She started forward with a low cry of pleasure when Mrs. Evert led Edna out, saying, "Edna

Carlisle, this is my daughter Florence, or Flossie, as we usually call her."

Flossie stood regarding Edna a moment with pleased surprise, then said with a thrill of delight in her voice, "O Mamma, her eyes look just like my violets, don't they! She looks like a violet herself with that blue dress on. May I call her Violet, Mamma?"

"You must ask her permission to do that," Mrs. Evert smilingly replied.

"You may call me Violet if you like," said Edna.

"O, I know I shall love you," Flossie exclaimed.
"You look so sweet."

"I shall love you too," Edna replied. And with a kiss they sealed the compact.

"Welcome home," said Dr. Evert, bowing over her hand with courtly grace. "What shall I call you? Must I call you Violet too?"

"No, you must not," said Flossie. "That is my name for her, my very own, and no one else must call her that."

"You selfish little dragon," exclaimed Dr. Evert. "Edna, she has paid you a compliment of the highest order, for she thinks violets are the loveliest things under the sun. Flossie, I think you should take her to see your bed of violets, that she may fully appreciate her new name."

Soon the little girls were flitting hither and

thither, as Flossie pointed out the beauties of the place, the flowers, animals, and fowls.

"Oh, it is all so lovely," said Edna. "But have

you no dog?"

Flossie's countenance fell.

"No, we haven't. John has one, but I hate it; it is so ugly. I wanted papa to drive it away, but he wouldn't because John is so fond of the ugly thing, and promised to keep him away from the house."

Edna expressed a wish to see the dog, and a minute later the little girls invaded John's domain.

"John," exclaimed Flossie, as they entered the stable, "Violet wants to see your dog."

John was a person who fully appreciated the sentiment, "Love me, love my dog," and he took their visit as a great compliment.

The dog (which certainly merited the epithet Flossie had applied to him) was a large brindle, with ears cut close to his head; and the envious knife had left him only about three inches of tail to wag in doggish delight.

However, he began evincing every symptom of joy of which he was capable, as he recognized a new friend in the little girl who lovingly patted him on the head, and finally went down upon her knees beside him, with her arms clasped around his neck.

John watched them with pleasure.

"He'll be fond of you now, Miss. He don't

make up easy with strangers, but he'll like you." Flossie looked at them in disgust.

"O, Violet," she said, half pleadingly, half reproachfully, "how can you like that ugly dog?"

"Why, isn't he a good dog?" inquired Edna, looking up at John.

"As good as ever was wrapped up in so much hide," he answered; "but Flossie hates anybody or anything that ain't pretty."

Edna looked up in mild surprise. "How can the poor thing help being ugly;" she said. "And it is wrong to hate anybody."

"I don't hate good people," Flossie retorted indignantly; "but it takes a long time to learn to love them if they are not pretty."

"You've got her there, Miss," said John, nodding at Edna.

"Ain't she sweet?" said Flossie, beaming upon him, now that the conversation was turned into a safer channel. "Her name is Edna Carlisle, but I am going to call her Violet, because she looks like one."

At this moment the supper bell rang. "Papa," Flossie exclaimed, as they entered the diningroom, "Violet likes John's dog. I thought she was going to kiss it," she added, tossing her head scornfully.

At this they all laughed. Flossie's antipathy to the ugly dog was a standing joke among them. "Well," said Dr. Evert, "if Edna must lavish

her love on a dog, we must get one that will not disgust your artist soul with its ugliness."

The evening was spent so merrily that Edna had no opportunity to be home-sick, or to feel the strangeness of her position; but when the goodnights had been spoken, and she had retired to her room, she felt too restless to sleep; so blowing out her light she sat by the open window, through which a flood of moonlight was pouring, and mused upon her new surroundings.

What a beautiful home this was, and how kindly they treated her. What could she ever do to let them know how much she appreciated it all? Once during the evening, when she had said something of the kind to Mrs. Evert, she had replied,—

"The only return we ask is to see you happy, and if you improve your opportunities, and grow up good and fair, we will have much cause for rejoicing."

Then Edna's mind wandered back to her old home. She wondered if her step-father had been very angry when he found her gone. She trembled when she thought of what her mother would have to endure if he was.

She loved her mother, but not with the love of a child who has constantly drank at the full fountain of mother love. Mrs. Slater had too often illtreated Edna for her to feel the filial love and respect which a loving mother inspires in her child, but Edna's memory could reach back a few years, to a time when her mother had been uniformly kind, and there memory lovingly rested now.

From her open window she could see the fountain and hear its gentle murmurings. A rose tree which grew beneath her window, was so near that she could almost touch its fragrant burden; and gleaming in the moonlight, distant about half a mile, she could see the white stones which marked the resting place of the "blessed dead."

She fancied she could discern the spot where her brother lay sleeping, and she wondered in her childish heart if he knew where she was.

Her love for her brother had been intense. A love such as only strong natures can feel; and when the grave closed upon him, her only desire had been to lie down upon his grave and weep her life away.

Arising, she went to her bureau, and took from a drawer the only thing that she had brought from her old home—Archie's Bible.

Kissing it reverently, she returned it to its place, only pausing to wipe away a tear which had fallen upon it, fearful lest it should soil her only treasure—all that was left of the past life of the children of Oscar Carlisle.

The week which followed Edna's adoption into Dr. Evert's family, was like a dream of bliss to the poor child, who knew so much of the thorns of life and nothing of its joys.

All that kindly hands and loving hearts could

devise to give her pleasure was done; and young as she was she understood and appreciated their efforts, and at times was overcome with a flood of grateful tears, which expressed more to her kind friends that her poorly spoken words of thanks.

Upon her twelfth birthday—which occurred about two weeks after she went to live with them—she was much surprised at the kindly care they took to commemorate the day; and also at the many presents which were bestowed upon her.

Flossie came forward with what she deemed the choicest of gifts—a large wax doll and a bouquet of violets. John, who had taken Edna into his heart when she condescended to like his dog, gave her a box of bon-bons. Mrs. Evert had a small bookcase, filled with a carefully chosen collection of books, placed in the little girl's room. But the doctor brought forward the crowning gift of all; it being a half-grown Newfoundland dog, which called forth the admiration of all, even of Flossie, and was received with joyous tears by Edna, and promptly named Leo, in honor of her old time favorite.

The next day was Sunday, and the family drove over to Rochester to worship in the village church.

At the invitation of the gospel, much to the surprise of the congregation, Dr. Evert went forward and "made the good confession."

He had been among them so long, and had so

often refused the offer of salvation, that they had ceased to expect him.

It was an hour of never-to-be-forgotten joy to Mrs. Evert—an hour which she had looked forward to, and prayed for, for many a long year, and only God and the holy angels knew of the fervent rejoicing of her faithful heart.

Tears of joy were coursing down her cheeks, and she seemed unconscious of all else, until she felt a light touch upon her arm, and looking up beheld Edna's white face, and heard her say:

"Am I too young to go?"

"Too young to start Heavenward? No, my child." Then, unconsciously dropping into Bible phraseology, she said: "If thou believest that Jesus is the Son of God, thou mayest."

Another ripple of surprise passed over the audience as the little white-robed figure went forward to bow in obedience to the King of kings.

A goodly sight, I ween. One, tall and strong in the power of his young manhood, come to lay all at the foot of the cross, and take upon him the yoke of the meek and lowly Jesus; the other, a frail young girl, just starting out on life's journey, fleeing for refuge to the Rock of Ages, claiming the promise of Him who said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." But which of the two will be first in the kingdom of heaven I cannot tell, for there the first shall be last and the last first.

A week later, Mrs. Slater, bowed beneath a load of sorrow, remorse, and shame, and desiring to have the old record blotted out and to begin life anew under the divine blessing, yielded a faithful obedience to the Word of God, and was baptized for the remission of her sins in the river which flowed near her home.

Many sympathizing hearts warmed toward the poor woman, for they felt that thenceforward her path would be a thorny one. Knowing the brutal character of her husband, they believed that his anger would be aroused when he learned that she had become a Christian; but none but she who voluntarily incurred his wrath, realized how great it would be. Lately her life had become a living martyrdom.

In former years he had delighted with all the evil joy of a lost soul in dragging her down to his own level; but since Archie's death she had steadily refused to drink with him, or even to enter the saloon, and her pale, sorrowful face served to give him some pricks of conscience, when he remembered how he had married this woman, promising to love and cherish her, instead of which he had broken her heart and spent her substance. However, these prickings of his sin-scarred conscience resulted in nothing except to make him more hard and cruel than he would otherwise have been.

Formerly his anger had been chiefly spent upon

the children; now it was vented upon the frail form of his wife, who was already staggering upon her thorny road beneath so many burdens.

When he learned of the step which she had this day taken—a step which had caused the angels of heaven to rejoice—his anger knew no bounds.

Half an hour later one looking into the saloon would have seen a besotted creature, mumbling curses in drunken anger; and with unsteady hand raising to his lips another draught of the fiery liquor, which would further assist to make him forget the cruel deed of that hour.

In the room where Archie had died, his mother lay prone upon the floor. There was a purple mark upon her face, and her pale lips murmured inarticulate moans.

We draw a curtain upon the scene, believing that in this hour of her Gethsemane, God will grant her some strengthening angel.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ATWOODS.

Search where you will, for fifty miles around, you could not find a more beautiful place than the big stone house upon the hill, which overlooks the village of Rochester. There it has stood for twenty-five years, crowned with ivy, and surrounded by all the beauty that people of wealth and taste can gather around them, to beautify this earth and cause them to forget the loss of the Eden that our first parents forfeited.

The house had been built by Victor Atwood, a young man who was noted for his great wealth and kindly heart. To this home he brought his young bride, and they soon grew into the hearts of the people, rich and poor alike delighting to love and honor them.

But Victor Atwood desired no higher honor than to be known as an humble child of God; no greater pleasure than that to be derived from his books, and domestic felicity.

Ten peaceful, happy years passed by, and then the light was quenched in those eyes which had ever beamed with brotherly kindness, and his hands, which had always been ready to do good, were folded across the cold and pulseless heart.

Of all the woes of earth the loss of our loved

ones seems the hardest to bear. We lay the dear form in the silent grave, and turn away, and by and by we teach our lips to smile; but memory ever hovers around that lonely grave and all the rest of our lives we

> "Sigh for the touch of a vanished hand, And the sound of a voice that is still."

The widow of Victor Atwood bravely picked up the broken strands of her life for the sake of her children who had thus early lost their counsellor and guide. The "Boatman pale" shortly came again into that family, bearing with him across the mystical river the youngest of the nestlings, leaving to this mourning Rachel but two children; Homer, the elder, who has before been mentioned in these chapters, and Esther, who sits yonder upon the veranda beside her mother, restlessly waiting for the arrival of the train, which is to bring her brother home from college.

But let me properly introduce them, for they take an important part in our story. Mrs. Atwood, being the elder, will sit for her portrait first.

She is of about the medium size, with eyes of almost youthful brightness, and the delicate color in her fair cheeks seems in striking contrast to the snow white hair, which crowns her head in natural waves, more beautiful than any produced by art. No one looking upon her peaceful countenance,

would have deemed that she had ever known aught of sorrow, but would have thought that "Time had laid his hand upon her heart, not smitingly, but gently, as the harper lays his open palm across his harp to deaden its vibrations."

Esther will be harder to describe. If I say that she is tall and slender, rather too slender for classic beauty, that her hair is golden brown, that her eyes are dark brown, like her mother's, and that she is just a little bit freckled, will you understand? Hers was not a beautiful face, but it was a very winsome and intelligent one; and those who were best acquainted with Esther Atwood, thought her very lovely, because in friendly intercourse, they could see the soul-beauty expressed in her face.

Mrs. Atwood had much reason to rejoice in the noble character of each of her children. After the death of her husband, she had found her only joy in moulding their plastic minds after her own high ideal of true nobility; and she had been amply rewarded by seeing them develop into a stainless youth and maiden, each seeking only after those things which are true, and lovely, and of good report.

Very early in life Homer had decided to become a preacher of the gospel; and his mother had rejoiced in his decision, regretting only that he must be absent from her while obtaining his education. However, she and Esther were very happy upon the morning when we introduce them to the reader, for Homer was coming to spend his vacation with them, and they looked forward to many happy hours which would intervene before he must return to school.

Presently the carriage, which had been sent to the depot, entered the grounds, and they went eagerly forward to welcome Homer and the friend who had accompanied him.

Homer sprang lightly to the ground, and embraced his mother and sister. Then with a smiling glance toward the young man who was slowly decending from the carriage, he said:

"Mother and Esther, you must congratulate me upon having succeeded, at the last moment, in persuading Arthur to come home with me."

"I am afraid that Homer's words may mislead you," said Arthur Russell, as he shook hands with them. "Out of the kindness of his heart, he invited me because he knew that after having spent several weeks of my last vacation in your pleasant home, this earth would seem to me a howling wilderness, if I were doomed to spend the summer elsewhere."

After being warmly welcomed, the young men repaired to their respective rooms to refresh themselves after their long journey.

Homer's first act after entering his room, was to walk to a window and look out upon the scene of

rural loveliness. It was one evidently dear to him; for his brown eyes lighted up with pleasure, as he surveyed the surroundings of his beautiful home.

His life had been peculiarly free from trouble. Having inherited a large fortune, and always been guided by his mother's wise counsels, he had escaped alike the pains of poverty and the sorrows which sin entails. Twenty-two years had passed over his head, bringing to him many graces of mind and heart; and though he knew nothing of sorrow by personal experience, yet his was a heart upon which the sorrows of the race deep inroads made, and his shoulders would ever be ready to share the burdens of others.

As he stood there dwelling upon the beauty of each dear and well remembered scene, he heard a tripping step upon the stair, and smiled as he recognized it. He knew it was Esther coming for a chat. Presently her golden brown head peeped in at the partly open door, and she said:

"May I come in for a few minutes?"

Homer went forward and drew her into the room, kissing her fondly. Esther was immeasurably dear to him, and he verily believed that no one had ever possessed so noble a mother, or so lovable a sister, as his own.

"Well," said he laughing, "'What wilt thou, queen Esther, and what is thy request? It shall be given thee to the half of the kingdom."

"I have no request," she answered saucily, "and I want no kingdom to reign over but your heart."

"Ah, my dear sister, that will always be yours, but I fear you will grow weary of ruling over so small a territory, and will be conquering some other province. Indeed, I feel quite certain the conquest has already been made of Arthur's heart, and it only remains to be seen if the queen will appropriate what she has conquered."

Esther was blushing furiously as she replied: "And you are so anxious to be rid of me, that you have invited this unfortunate young man here, knowing this?"

"Esther, my dear, I invited him from sheer pity; besides I knew you would have to give him an answer sooner or later, for playing the mischief with his heart last summer. I fancied he is not disagreeable to my Queenie, and if I must give you up to some one, I prefer Arthur to any one else. He has graduated with the highest honors, and I predict for him a bright future."

After this Esther rushed into general gossip, telling him of all that had lately occurred in the neighborhood, and finally ended by speaking of the new member of Dr. Evert's family, and the doctor's recent conversion.

A few evenings later, as the sun was declining, the family of Dr. Evert might have been seen sitting upon the veranda, enjoying the balmy evening air, which was wafted to them, laden with the fragrance of a thousand flowers. Edna was reading one of the books which Mrs. Evert had presented to her, and Leo was lying at her feet, eager to receive her affectionate notice. The doctor and his wife were busily engaged in conversation, and Flossie was sitting upon the steps singing a lullaby to her doll. "There comes Homer Atwood," exclaimed Dr. Evert, and he went eagerly forward to welcome his approaching guest.

Mrs. Evert also received him gladly. And Flossie dropped her doll in her great delight. She and Homer were great friends, and almost her earliest recollection was that of being carried around in Homer's arms.

After he had been duly welcomed, Mrs. Evert introduced him to Edna. Homer had never met her before, but he pressed her hand warmly, as he said: "We shall be good friends, I trust. I was very fond of your brother, and I deeply sympathize with you in your loss of him."

Edna was not a bashful child, and there was a womanly dignity in her manner, as she answered him, her blue eyes full of tears:

"I thank you for your kind words. I have often heard Archie speak lovingly of you." Then she retreated to her book and chair and the conversation became general.

Presently she heard Homer praising the beauty of Leo, and heard Flossie say: "He belongs to

Edna. Papa gave him to her for a birthday present. And," she jealously added, "I do believe she loves that dog better that she does me. Mamma gave her some books, and I gave her a doll; she is always reading, or petting that dog, and she never plays with her doll."

"What?" said Dr. Evert, "you are not finding

fault with your Violet, are you?"

"No," said Flossie, remorsefully; "I am not; I think she is just as sweet as ever can be, but I do wish she liked dolls."

Edna laid down her book, smiling a little sadly, as she said:

"I do like my doll very much; and I will always keep it just as nice as it is now."

"Yes, I suppose you will," said Flossie, a little spitefully, "for you never play with it; I would like to know how it could get spoilt."

"My dear," said Mrs. Evert, gently, "you must remember that Edna is older than you are."

"She is only four years older than I am, Mamma, and I know I shall love dolls all my life."

"Come, Nellie, give us some music," said Dr. Evert; "we must have some singing now that we can once more have the pleasure of listening to Homer's voice."

Mrs. Evert bade a servant light up the drawingroom, and they all went in; she seating herself at the piano, played some familiar church music, which they all joined in singing.

An hour was spent while they were thus happily engaged. It has grown quite dark outside, except for lurid flashes of lightning which occasionally light up the heavens.

But who is that coming so wearily up toward the house? It is a woman's figure, and she totters as if her strength was almost spent. Low moans occasionally issue from her pale lips, and blood is streaming from an ugly cut upon her face.

She struggles on until she reaches the veranda. Through the open window she can see the happy occupants of the beautiful room; but her eyes rest upon Edna, noticing her dainty garments, and the happy smile upon her face.

Seeing her child thus safely sheltered from the rude storm of adversity which is bursting over her own head, the poor woman with a cry of "Oh, my lamb! My precious lamb!" throws up her arms and falls unconscious on the ground.

CHAPTER VIII.

ROCK ME TO SLEEP, MOTHER.

The morning sun is just peeping over the hill tops, gilding the world with a radiance of golden dawn; but early as it is, Esther Atwood is moving softly about in her room, with a heart as light as any bird that sings his matins in the forest.

With deft fingers she brushes out her golden brown curls, which ripple far below her slender waist; then after donning a dress of pale pink mull, and a white gainesborough hat, she trips softly across the wide hall, and taps thrice at Homer's door, calling him gently by name.

She is surprised, however, when he immediately opens the door, dressed as if ready for going out.

"What now, queen Esther?" he inquires as he kisses her rosy cheeks, where the dimples are com-

ing and going so witchingly.

"'I am siren of the Nile,'" she answered mockingly, "and you shall sail with me in my 'gilded barge.' Perhaps you have forgotten that my boat, the 'River Queen,' is moored in the river near the house. If you will come and sail with me down the river, we will join our voices with the birds this morning, when they sing their anthems of praise, I will fill your arms with water-lilies, crown your brow with roses, and bring you back

to breakfast with an appetite such as you have not known since you went away to school."

Homer looked down at her with a tender smile.

"Sweet siren of the Nile," he replied, "I will go with you. What more could one wish? 'Sweet prospects, sweet birds, and sweet flowers.' I ask no more—until breakfast time."

They crossed the smoothly-shaven lawn, down to the daisied banks of the river—paths often trod by them in childish glee, but never when they loved each other more fondly than now.

Homer would have taken the oars, but Esther forbade him, saying:

"No, I will row, and you shall talk. Tell me why you staid away so late last night? I know it must have been something unusual that kept you when it looked so much like it would storm."

"No," she said, as he attempted to possess himself of the oars, "you shall do as I bid you. I have rowed upon this stream until it is no longer a weariness to me."

"See there!" she said, as she bared one soft, white arm above the dimpled elbow. "My arms have become as brawny as any washer-woman's."

Homer laughed derisively.

"Nothing could ever spoil your arms, my dainty sister; but I think I will defer telling my story until after we have had our songs and waterlilies."

Then Esther began to sing in a sweet, melodious

voice, and Homer joined her in a tenor of rare strength and melody. The sweet tones floated down the river, and united with the music of the songsters of the wood.

"Let us awake our joys;
Strike up with cheerful voice,
Each creature sing.
Angels begin the song;
Mortals the strains prolong,
In accents sweet and strong,
Jesus is King."

With anthems of praise and snatches of wild, sweet melody, the boat was finally anchored in the bayou, where the water-lilies grew. Esther deftly kept the boat in position, while Homer reached over and gathered the spotless beauties, and laid them in the boat at her feet.

"Oh, how sweet they are!" she exclaimed. "Such dazzling whiteness and purity! and yet they choose a most unlovely spot in which to send forth their lovely blossoms."

"Your words," said Homer, "remind me of those beautiful lines of Ingelow's."

"Repeat them, please. I have forgotten them if I ever read them."

At her request he repeated the lines in a strong, melodious voice, which was destined to prove a great power in the years to come, in swaying the feelings of the people:

"'My heart is bitter, lilies, at your sweet;
Why did the dew-drops fringe your chalices?
Why in your beauty are you thus complete,
You silver ships—you floating palaces?
Oh, if it need be, you must allure man's eye,
Yet wherefore blossom here? O why? O why?'"

After having gathered a great quantity of flowers, they turned the boat homeward. Homer insisted that he should row, as they were now going up stream.

"And now," said he, "I will tell you why I was away so late last night."

Then he related how he had called at Dr. Evert's, and while they were engaged in singing they had been startled by hearing a piercing shriek, and the fall of some one near the window; he and Dr. Evert had rushed out and carried in the person, who proved to be Mrs. Slater. She had fainted, and considerable time elapsed before she returned to consciousness, notwithstanding the doctor assiduously applied restoratives. When she had recovered sufficiently to be able to speak, she told them that since she became a Christian, her husband had shamefully abused her, and upon that evening she had barely escaped with her life.

Life with him had become too painful for endurance, and she had decided to go home to her mother.

When Dr. Evert asked Mrs. Slater if her husband was to go unpunished, she said, and truly, that no indignities which might be heaped upon

him could relieve her suffering, and she could not bear to bring dishonor upon the man whom she had promised to love, honor and obey.

A few evenings later Mrs. Slater bade good-bye to Dr. Evert's family, pressed her child to her heart with a voiceless sob, and stepped upon the train which was to take her back to her old home.

It was quite dark when the train rushed into the little village, deposited its one passenger, then dashed on into the darkness again.

Wearily she picked her way among the dimly lighted streets, until at last she reached the house where dwelt her widowed mother.

With a choking sensation in her throat, she passed up the graveled path toward the house.

Memory came back with overwhelming force, and she sank exhausted upon the porch steps at her mother's door.

Like pictures in a panorama, visions of the happy past came before her, and she bowed her head and wept. How familiar it all was. Even in the gathering gloom she could faintly discern the rose bushes, that were breathing out their sweetness on the air, just as they had done when she was blithe and young, and had plucked their fragrant blossoms to adorn herself and make her fair for her lover's eyes.

Through that door she had passed upon the arm of her handsome young husband, a happy, happy

bride. In after years she had often returned thither with him and her children. How well she remembered the last time they had visited there together. She and her mother had sat upon the porch enjoying the evening coolness after a sultry day. Archie played with his dog upon the grassy lawn, and her husband, his handsome face aglow with happiness, walked to and fro upon the porch, with Edna, a little white-robed prattler of three years, in his arms. She seemed a tiny image of himself as she sat thus, with one arm thrown around his neck in childish grace, her dimpled hands filled with roses which had been gathered from the rose tree that was now waving its branches over the head of her heart-broken mother.

Mrs. Slater sobbed as she remembered how her husband had paused beside her chair, and stooping down, had bidden Edna lay the roses against mamma's cheek, and then had laughingly demanded which was the purest pink, her cheeks or the roses.

How happy he had looked. No trace then of the fever which was so soon to quench the brightness of those beautiful eyes, which were beaming on her so full of love-light. But he had died; and the cheeks he had admired were white and thin, and bore marks of cruel blows, administered by a drunkard's hand. She moaned and wrung her hands; the murmur of the rose leaves in the gentle breeze, sounded to her ears like pitying voices, and the dews of night, that wet her uplifted face, were like the tears of Heaven.

She was but thirty-five years old, as we count time, but looked fifty. And if counted by heartbeats of sorrow, who shall measure her age!

A stranded wreck! A wasted life! A fainting pilgrim on life's weary way!

While she sits there weeping and praying for strength to press on to the end, we will look within the house and see her mother.

She is a woman of perhaps sixty-eight years of age, but looking younger. Glancing at the book she is reading we see that it is the Book of books. Then we know the cause of that almost youthful, happy look.

Prayer from an ever-living source has upheld her in her lonely widowhood. And in her heart is resting the peace which God giveth to his beloved.

As she reads on, her ear is startled by a faltering step upon the porch; then comes a knock at the door, and a voice calls softly, "Mother, it is I, Gertrude."

With a cry of "Oh Gertie, Gertie," she springs to the door—opens it—gives a hasty glance at the forlorn figure which tells its own story, and the two women weep in each other's arms.

The night wanes apace. The morning begins to dawn, but still they sit and talk and weep. At

last Mrs. Slater lays her head in her mother's lap and says:

"Oh, Mother! Mother! If I could only forget it all; all that has come to me in these unhappy years! How those beautiful lines of Florence Percy's keep weaving themselves through my brain."

"Mother, dear Mother, the years have been long, Since I last listened your lullaby song; Sing, then, and unto my soul it shall seem Womanhood's years have been only a dream. Clasped to your heart in a loving embrace, With your light lashes just sweeping my face, Never hereafter to wake or to weep;—

Rock me to sleep, Mother, rock me to sleep!"

CHAPTER IX.

EARL WHITNEY.

"Quiet talks she liketh best;
And her smile it seems half holy;
As if drawn from thoughts more far
Than our common jestings are."

After Edna was adopted into Dr. Evert's family, life presented to her a different aspect. All her wants were supplied almost before she knew her own wishes. Dr. Evert was always courteous and kind. Mrs. Evert treated her with the same loving tenderness she evinced toward Flossie; and Flossie herself regarded Edna with a love almost amounting to adoration; and fully and freely was that love returned.

Mrs. Evert closely observed the tendency of the young girl's mind, and seeing how her whole soul was drawn toward the "good, the beautiful, and the true," felt amply rewarded for the care bestowed upon her.

From the time of Edna's advent into the family, she heard frequent reference made to Mrs. Whitney, the only sister of Dr. Evert. She had married a wealthy Chicago banker, and her life was almost wholly devoted to the fashionable world, yet for many years it had been her custom to spend the summer season in her brother's pleasant home.

She and her children usually came about the

first of June, and staid until the first of September, making the place joyous with laughter and song.

It was with a feeling of dismay that Edna learned that they were expected to arrive in a short time. The life she was now leading was very sweet to her, and she feared to meet these fashionable relatives, for doubtless they would consider her an intruder.

She was destined, however, to meet one of them sooner than had been anticipated; for one evening while the family was at supper, they heard a quick, eager tread in the hall, and presently there entered the dining-room a handsome, debonair youth of perhaps eighteen years of age, who was greeted with glad surprise, and cries of "Why! Earl Whitney, where did you drop from? Why didn't you let us know when you would arrive, that we might have met you at the depot?" and kindred expressions.

Earl replied: "I did not expect to be here so soon; I begged off at the last moment from stopping to make that visit with mother and the girls at Mrs. Thayer's, and so here I am ahead of time. But, Auntie, you would not blame me for hastening if you knew how I have longed to come."

"Blame you?" said Mrs. Evert. "Why, Earl, you are as welcome as the sunshine. We are very, very glad to see you my dear boy. You could not come an hour too soon to please us."

It was quite evident he was a general favorite,

judging by the glad welcome which he received; and looking at his winsome face, and head covered with curling waves of fair hair, Edna did not wonder that he was beloved; but she little thought how closely the joy and sorrow of her future would be interwoven with his. A plate was laid for the unexpected guest, and he fell to with youthful zest, declaring that he had been whetting his appetite for country fare, and that while at school it had always served to lighten his studies, to remember that he would spend his vacation with them.

"We also have looked forward to your coming, my boy," said Dr. Evert. "But how goes it with you at school? Do you begin to think that 'Wisdom will die with you?"

Earl laughed merrily. "No sir," he replied. "I have not advanced so far as that, but as the fellow said, 'I've got a middling tight grip, sir, on a handful of things I know."

"That is right, Earl, keep a tight grip on what you learn. You have a bright future before you, and I shall watch your career with interest."

That evening always stood out a bright spot in Edna's memory. It was as if another gleam of sunshine had shone athwart her pathway.

The friends of Earl Whitney were wont to liken his presence to the sunlight, which warms and cheers, and sad indeed must have been the heart which was not made happier by contact with this handsome, guileless youth, with his happy laugh and sympathetic voice.

Yet there was nothing effeminate in the manner of the stalwart young fellew, unless it was his almost womanly tenderness, and little, loving gestures, that imperceptibly won the love of those with whom he associated.

How swiftly those bright summer days fled by, ringing sweet peans of joy through all their future.

Perhaps the greatest charm, and at the same time the greatest fault of Earl Whitney's disposition, was his adaptability of moods and opinions to those of the person with whom he was associated.

Mrs. Evert observed this prominent characteristic, and sighed over the future, when he should come in contact with evil minds.

At present, however, he was a most delightful companion, entering with enthusiasm into conversation with his uncle concerning his profession, or any subject that he chose to discuss, charming the elder man with his readiness to adopt his views, and dress them up in bright, strong language, which made them seem doubly attractive. Or he would sit beside his aunt and skim lightly over the subjects which she brought forth from her well stored mind, with as much ardor as if to do so was the chief joy of his existence.

Next he would be engaged in reading poetry to

Edna, or telling her stories of grand heroes of the past, and of noble deeds which will live through all future time; observing meanwhile with admiring eyes, that the stories of noble ambition and consecrated lives caused the color to flush her dainty blush-rose face, her lips to grow tremulous with feeling, and her shy, sweet eyes to look like Flossie's own violets covered with dew.

To Flossie, Earl was just as delightful a companion; going gayly with her to see her pets, praising and caressing her white kittens, deeply interested in her numerous family of doves, zealously striving to learn the names of all her pets, and would even go down in adoration before her bed of voilets, or enter with enthusiasm into the laudable enterprise of gathering flowers of different hues to discern which was the most becoming to Edna's fair complexion

At the expiration of two weeks Mrs. Whitney and her daughters arrived, and Edna soon felt reconciled to their coming, for they treated her only with courteous kindness, which grew into tender friendship as the acquaintance advanced.

Mrs. Whitney was a tall and stately blonde with wondrous grey eyes, capable of a thousand expressions. Beulah, her fifteen year old daughter, closely resembled her in face and disposition; and Ivy, sweet, gentle Ivy, how shall I describe her?

- "I will paint her as I see her. Ten times have lilies blown Since She looked upon the sun.
- "And her face is lily clear, Lily shaped and dropped in duty To the law of its own beauty.
- "Oval cheek, encolored faintly, Which a trail of golden hair, Keeps from fading off to air.
- "And a forehead fair and saintly, Which two blue eyes undershine, Like meek prayers before a shrine."

Sweet, gentle Ivy, tender and clinging like the vine whose name you bear, strong only to love and suffer. I wonder what the future will bring to you, my sweet saint? But this I know, you will grieve most deeply over the sorrows of those you love, and rejoice only in their joys.

Ivy was a striking contrast to the dark-eyed daughter of the house, rosy cheeked, bright, impulsive little Flossie. The bond of love between the two cousins was very strong, but did not equal in intensity that between Flossie and Edna.

Summer fled gayly and brightly, and at its close Mrs. Whitney returned to Chicago for another fashionable season, and her children returned to school.

Mrs. Evert engaged a private teacher to instruct Edna and Flossie. Oh, how different was Edna's life now, from what it had been a few months before. No more pinching poverty; no more unkind words, or cruel blows; to the contrary, she was surrounded by wealth, love, and refining influences.

Mr. Slater had suddenly disappeared, no one knew whither. Her mother was gone from her. All that had made up her past had vanished, and her very existence seemed changed, as these new and refining influences wrought upon her sensitive nature.

But in Taylorville lived a sad-eyed woman whose hourly prayer was that Edna would grow up good and fair, and escape the shoals which had wrecked her mother's life.

CHAPTER X.

THE MOSS ROSE.

"Gather ye rosebuds as ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying,
And this same flower that blooms to-day
To-morrow may be dying."

Day after day rose and retired, week after week glided away, and months have been merged into years, since Edna found a home in Dr. Evert's family.

When we see her again, she is wearing the beauty of eighteen summers on her maiden brow.

She is home now from school, to spend her vacation with those dearly loved friends who are watching over her career with so much of joy and pride.

Young as she is, she has developed much literary talent, and her poems and short, pointed articles always receive a welcome in the temperance and religious papers of the day.

Arthur Russell and Esther have married, and he is now editor of a thriving temperance journal in Chicago; and he is always glad to print Edna's productions, for they breathe the pain of a noble soul who knows from past woe the sorrows caused by the rum power. A soul who has consecrated her life to a high and holy calling; who will read God's book of nature with a poet's eye, and inter-

pret, for those who fail to see, the sweet messages of Infinite love written between the lines.

Many eyes are watching her course with interest and predicting great success for her because of her enthusiasm and evident poetic ability.

Flossie believed that no mortal had ever before transcribed such beautiful thoughts as those which flowed from Edna's pen, and her love almost amounted to adoration for her adopted sister.

Flossie's ambition for herself was that of excelling as an artist. All her life she had been a beauty worshiper, and skilled instructors had been engaged to develop her natural talent for painting, and under their teaching she had made astonishing progress.

She had painted Edna in many attitudes, but was always dissatisfied with her work, though her friends considered it very natural; but her love for Edna made her exacting and she declared that it shamed her Violet's beauty to call those miserable daubs natural.

Edna had been home from school about a week now, and Flossie had been watching every attitude, gesture and expression, preparatory to trying her skill again.

This constant scrutiny to which she was subjected would have been exceedingly annoying to Edna from anyone else, but she knew the tenderness underlying it, and thanked God for the love of this loyal little heart.

Earl Whitney was with them again. His mother and sisters had decided to spend the season at a fashionable watering place, and had been anxious to have him accompany them; but he had steadily refused to do so. What to him was fashionable society, in comparison to the companship of these dearly loved relatives, and the pleasure of looking into a pair of dark blue eyes that had learned to brighten at his coming, or to listen to the sweet voice of an earnest soul, that always aroused his best impulses and most noble resolves.

On the afternoon of which we write, Earl had ridden over to Atwood's, in hopes of meeting Homer. Although widely differing in disposition, there had been a warm friendship between the two ever since early boyhood.

Homer had been called to assume the charge of the Rochester church, as soon as his college days were over; and in accepting the position he felt that his dearest wish was satisfied; for to minister to this people, that he had known all his life, had been the hope which had hung triumphant and star-like over long years of wearisome application to study.

He preferred this charge because he felt that having known the people from his infancy, and been familiar with their joys and sorrows, and knowing the circumstances and disposition of each one, he could better lead their souls to God than a stranger could.

He loved his work. The master passion of his soul was the desire to win souls for the garner of immortality; and to this season of usefulness his hopes and aims had tended for many years; and he had been wont to say:

"I would I were an excellent divine,
That had my Bible at my finger-ends;
That men might hear, out of this mouth of mine,
How God doth make his enemies his friends."

Earl failed to meet his friend, for at the time he called Homer was two miles away, sitting at the bedside of old Mr. Allen, who was slowly dying of consumption.

The sufferer was informing Homer of the burden that weighed down his heart and oppressed his spirit, more than the disease which was slowly eating his life away. He had been a grower of small fruit, and their little farm had never made them more than a frugal living; and now that his long illness had necessitated the employment of help and the payment of doctor bills, they had been obliged to mortgage their little home; the note would soon fall due, and he feared he would have to die in a strange place and leave his wife and son penniless in the world.

"I have worked hard all my life," he said, "and we have denied ourselves many of the comforts of life to retain our little home; but it has all been in vain."

"Oh, why!" he exclaimed vehemently, "if there

is a God, as you say, why do some have all the comforts and luxuries of life, and others who are equally, or perhaps more worthy, never obtain more than a bare living?"

"My friend," said Homer kindly, "you must remember that when God created man, he meant him to be a perfectly happy being, with no unsupplied wants. Through disobedience he fell from that blest estate, and in the struggle between man and man things have become very unequally divided. But think you God looks on unmoved? The Bible is full of comfort for the poor, and commands upon the rich to regard the welfare of the poor. And doth he not say, 'I have chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, to be heirs of the kingdom?' Mark the word chosen. And when the Son of God came to earth, did he not seek the poor and lowly? Not that Jesus ever cast out the rich who came to him, but he went to the poor."

They talked long and earnestly, and Homer's eyes lighted up with holy joy as he told of the mercies of his God, and tried to win the weary soul to a hope and faith in a God of infinite love.

Promising to call again soon, Homer took leave of the sick man and his aged wife, first inquiring where he might find their son. He was told that Frank was hoeing in the garden, and thither he proceeded.

This young man, Frank Allen, was the first convert under Homer's preaching, and consequently

was very dear to him, as the first fruits of his ministry.

Frank was busily engaged, but at Homer's request for a few minutes' conversation, they went and sat down in the shade of a large apple tree. Presently Homer said:

"I have just learned that your place is mort-gaged; will you not let me help you? I shall be glad if you will let me pay off the mortgage, and will consider me your banker while you are in trouble."

Frank had been fanning himself vigorously with his straw hat, but he paused suddenly at this unexpected speech, and a ruddy flush mounted to his brow, as he replied:

"I deeply appreciate your kindness, sir, but you are not responsible for our troubles, and it would not be right to expect you to do so much."

"Ah," said Homer, smiling, "you do not wish to make me disobedient to my Master, do you? His command is, that we 'bear one another's burdens.' I wish you would view this in the proper light,—you would not refuse to accept a favor from a brother according to the flesh. We are brothers in the kingdom and patience of God's dear Son; and shall we count His blood of little value?"

Frank was silent a moment; when he raised his

eyes they were brimming with tears, which did not shame his manhood.

"I will accept your offer, sir," he said, "upon the condition that you will let me repay the money when I am able. Money can be repaid, but for the kindness which prompted the offer I shall be your debtor forever. It will cause my father's days to end in peace, and prove to him than Christianity is *more* than a name, and that God is not a God of wrath, but of *love*."

It was with a light heart that Homer pursued his homeward way; his was a heart upon which the sorrows of the race deep inroads made, and he was thankful for his abundant wealth, which made it possible for him to lift many burdens from weary shoulders.

His way home led past the cemetery, and he decided to stop and see if some flowers, which his mother had recently planted upon his father's grave, needed attention.

The grave he sought was at the farther end of the cemetery, and he passed along, reading, as he had often done before, the name upon each monument, musing meanwhile upon the history of each silent occupant, for all who lay here had been friends and neighbors.

Finally he came to the marble monument erected by Dr. Evert, and pausing, read:

"TO THE MEMORY OF

ARCHIE CARLISLE.

AGED THIRTEEN YEARS, EIGHT MONTHS AND TWO DAYS.

He was faithful unto death, and died in the hope

of a glorious resurrection,

'WHEN JESUS COMES.'"

Tears sprang to Homer's eyes when he remembered the sorrowful life of him who lay beneath, and he thanked God that he had been instrumental in leading the desolate child to the hope of at last being crowned a son of the living God.

Presently he heard soft footfalls on the grass; and looking around he beheld Edna, a sweet, white-robed vision, bearing in her arms a white moss rose which she meant to plant upon her brother's grave.

Homer courteously raised his hat, and she deposited her fragrant burden upon the grass, and holding out her hand to him, said, sweetly: "I know of no more appropriate place in which to thank you, as I have long desired to do, for your kindness to him who lies in this grave, and through him to me."

Then seeing the wondering look in Homer's brown eyes, she explained:

"It was you who brought him into the Sundayschool, and made him acquainted with Mrs. Evert, and from that meeting all the happiness of our lives has come."

"Then," said Homer, "your thanks are due to her and not to me."

Edna looked at him with those thrilling dark blue eyes of hers, and said earnestly:

"God is my witness, I do thank her most fervently; but I have been taught to look also to first causes."

Homer replied: "Then the first cause is the religion of our Lord, which has made her the noble woman that she is." Changing the subject, he said lightly:

"Will you permit me to plant your flower for you?"

She directed him where to place it, and seated herself beside the grave, fanning her face with her broad-brimmed hat.

Soon the fragrant, white blossoms with their mossy covering were nodding over the head of the grave, and she put out her hand caressingly, saying:

"I think moss roses are so beautiful. Do you know how they came to have moss on them?"

"No," he smilingly replied. "I have always admired them on account of that singularity, but I am not sufficiently instructed in fairy lore, to be able to guess how they came by their mossy covering."

Edna laughed softly and said, "It is such a

pretty story, I must no longer permit you to remain in ignorance of it.

"Well, once upon a time, the rose, which is a native of the south, was transplanted to a colder clime, and it grew sick in the cold blast, and pined for the blue skies of its sunny southern home. Now all flowers are said to possess a god-parent, and the rose chose the nightingale for hers. When the nightingale came to inquire how it could minister to her happiness, she said: 'I am dying with cold.' Then the nightingale speedily flew to the brook, and returned with bits of moss, with which it covered the rose to keep out the cold. Since then the rose has become accustomed to our cold clime, and many of them have thrown off their mossy covering, but some still retain it, and we call them moss roses."

Homer smiled, and bowed, saying:

"I thank you for your pretty story. I have always admired the moss rose; now it will seem to me doubly beautiful, and will always be associated in my mind with her who has just told me of its origin."

"I am very fond of flowers," he continued, "and often wonder how any one can doubt the goodness of God, who has so beautifully adorned the earth for our delight."

There was a sweet, dreamy smile upon Edna's lips as she said:

"I often wonder if there will be flowers in

Heaven. Surely Heaven will contain all things most precious and beautiful. But will we find there the pansies, and the violets, and all our humble favorites?"

Homer had been gazing in the distance: now his eyes shone upon her so brightly, they seemed to have caught a radiance from the New Jerusalem. He replied: "We may not tell, but through the gates ajar, we catch a glimpse of the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley; that flower which was bruised for our transgressions, yet gave forth the sweeter perfume, and is now blooming in more than former loveliness, the chief adornment of the Heavenly City."

A silence, deep and sweet, fell between them, and they sat there, each lost in blissful musings. Finally, Edna exclaimed: "Why, the sun is setting! I must be going home. Did you see Earl Whitney to-day? He went to your house this afternoon, but I thought perhaps he did not meet you, as I found you here."

"I did not see him," said Homer, assisting her to rise; "but if you will allow me to accompany you home, perhaps I may find him there."

She gave smiling assent, and they silently bade farewell to a happy hour—an hour never forgotten by either, but always remembered by Homer as the time when he gave his heart to this white-robed girl; and he dedicated to her the following lines.

"A violet in her lovely hair,
A rose upon her bosom fair;
But oh, her eyes!
A lovelier violet disclose,
And her red lips the sweetest rose
That's 'neath the skies.''

8

CHAPTER XI.

"LOVE AND LOVE ONLY, IS THE LOAN FOR LOVE."

"Love rules the court, the camp, the grove, And men below, and saints above; For love is Heaven, and Heaven is love."

One morning when Edna and Flossie returned from a ramble, Mrs. Evert said to Edna:

"Earl has just returned from the post-office, and has brought you a letter, my dear."

Edna took up the missive and a shadow crept over her face, as she recognized her mother's handwriting.

After reading it she said with a soft little sigh:

"It is from mother; she wishes me to come to see her."

"I do not wonder," said Mrs. Evert, smiling. "I think it a very natural wish."

Flossie's eyes flashed rebelliously. "I think it a shame," she said, "that we should have to give Violet up so soon. I flattered myself she would be mine to have and to hold, until she must leave again for school."

Edna looked at Mrs. Evert pleadingly.

"Won't you let Flossie go with me? I wouldn't mind going if she might accompany me."

Mrs. Evert replied: "Since it seems that you are both liable to be distracted with grief if you are separated, I suppose I must not refuse your re-

quest; and if it will give you pleasure, Earl and I will take you in the carriage, as I should be pleased to see your mother myself."

So it was decided, and Edna notified her mother that they would come to visit her on the following Thursday.

The evening before the day appointed for making their visit, Mrs. Evert went with the doctor to call upon some friends.

Earl had gone out near the fountain to smoke a cigar. Presently he saw Edna and Flossie coming toward him, arm in arm.

A striking contrast they formed.

Edna calm and smiling, dressed in pure white, her raven tresses wound in a coronal above her shapely head. Flossie luxuriating in her first long dress—a pale sea green—her fair hair rippling over her shoulders, her dark eyes brimming with mischief, and the dimples coming and going roguishly, in her rosy cheeks.

Earl threw away his cigar as they drew near.

"Why, Earl Whitney!" Flossie cried. "How wasteful you are! Old grandma Miller says, 'wilful waste makes woeful want.' And I'll b—e—yes, I believe I'll bet, that cigar cost a quarter, and you had just lighted it. Now the money you threw away there would have bought little Bridget Reardon a new calico dress, so she could have her old one washed. She told me she hadn't a change."

Earl laughed and inquired:

"And did you supply her needs out of your

yearly allowance for bon bons?"

Flossie laughed merrily. "No indeed I did n't. I am too wise for that. I let my money continue to flow uninterruptedly into the confectioner's coffers; and I handed her case over to mamma, who sports a longer purse than mine."

"But indeed, Earl, I am ashamed of you men. Why, I know there are men in this neighborhood, who have spent hundreds of dollars for tobacco, who never gave twenty-five dollars to the missionary cause in their whole lives."

"And how much has my fair cousin given the cause?" said Earl, pinching her cheeks.

"I gave ten dollars last May," she answered triumphantly.

"From your own allowance?"

"Certainly not. I begged it from papa."

"Oh, you self-sacrificing little creature," said Earl. "Don't come preaching to me until you are willing to practice what you preach."

Then turning to Edna he said: "Do you also consider smoking a disagreeable vice?"

She smilingly replied: "I certainly think it a very expensive and unlovely habit, and I am inclined to think with Dr. Linderman, that if God had meant man to smoke, he would have made him with a chimney in the top of his head, for the smoke to go out at."

Half an hour was pleasantly spent in laughter and badinage, and then Edna silently flitted away to the pansy bed.

Earl's eyes followed her wistfully. He had come to the country meaning to tell her of his love, but it seemed harder to do than he supposed.

> "He either fears his fate too much, Or his deserts are small, That puts it not unto the touch, To win or lose it all."

As the lines were flitting through his mind, a rougish cheek was laid against own, and Flossie said softly:

"Why don't you tell her, Earl?"

His face flushed and he inquired confusedly: "Tell her what?"

"That you love her, of course. Why Earl it is no secret, every creature on the place knows it; even my doves were talking about it when I fed them this morning."

"See, Earl! the moon is rising. Now I have n't read so many novels without learning the value of moonlight in a case like this. I am going into the house to play all the love songs I can think of, and if you can't win her under such favorable circumstances, you are no cousin of mine."

She glided away, and Earl soon heard her singing and playing "Annie Laurie."

Edna was coming toward him over the soft, dewy grass, bearing in her hand a cluster of pansies.

She paused beside him, speaking with a tone of surprise and disappointment in her voice:

"Has Flossie gone in? I gathered these pansies for her, they look so beautiful in her golden hair."

"Stay!" said Earl. "Won't my hair serve for a background to show off the beauty of your flowers? It is about the color of Flossie's I believe."

He lowered his handsome head, and she, flushing daintily, laid the cluster against his bright waves of hair, saying:

"Very pretty indeed; but they won't stay there unless I hold them; and I fear my arm would soon grow weary, so I will pin them to the lapel of your coat."

She was so intent upon her task, she never knew that for an instant his fair mustache was pressed lightly to her raven tresses.

Then when their task was completed, he caught the dimpled hands in his large strong ones, and in a straightforward, manly fashion, he told her the story of his love, and won from her the confession of an answering love, and the promise that some time in the future, (not for several years, perhaps, but sometime in the sweet future,) she would wear his name. And Earl promised to wait content, so long as he had the assurance that his love was returned.

Then he took from his pocket a ring, and with many fond words slipped it on her finger.

"When I bought this ring," said he. "I told

myself if I were not permitted to place it on your finger, I would make a little grave and bury it; and all my life I would watch over it and tend it, just as I would watch over the grave in my heart of my buried love."

She laughed softly. "Why, Earl, I had no idea you were so sentimental. However, I fancy you would soon have learned to love some one else, and have forgotten your disappointment."

"No," he replied solemnly. "I should never love any one else. I love you for your pure and noble aspirations; for your firmness of character; because you are one of the few who are in the world but not of it; qualities which I greatly admire, but do not possess.

"Pardon me, my love, if I say that in our world, the fashionable world I mean, I have met many women who were as fair to look upon as you; bright, and gay, and beautiful; but they could never win my love. I think I unconsciously gave my heart to you when you were yet a little girl, and my love has grown with your growth, until many floods could not quench it.

"'The might of one fair face sublimes my love,
For it hath weaned my heart from low desires."

* * * * * * *

"'Forgive me, if I can not turn away
From those sweet eyes that are my earthly Heaven,
For they are guiding stars, benignly given,

To tempt my footsteps to the upward way; And if I dwell too fondly in thy sight, I live, and love, in God's peculiar light."

Edna's head was resting against his breast, and one soft white arm stole around his neck, as she said, with almost a sob in her voice:

"Oh Earl, if I could but lead you up to the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent."

"Perhaps you may, my love;" he said, as he kissed her brow tenderly, reverently. "Perhaps you may. When I am here with you and aunt Nellie and my uncle, who seem to live so fully in the light of Heaven, God seems very near, and his gospel the word of a Divine being. But when I go back to our world, my mother's world, I mean, that laughs to scorn any law but their own wishes; then God seems a myth, and his Word a pretty fable."

Flossie was still playing when she heard them part at the hall door; Edna going to her room, and Earl returning to pace in the moonlight beside the fountain, where he had won the promise true of the shy, sweet maiden of his choice.

Flossie tripped out after him, and slipping her hand through his arm, paced to and fro with him.

She knew his suit had prospered, and the very spirit of mischief danced in her eyes as she said:

"What did she say, Earl? Did she promise to 'love you only, cling to you through evil and through good report, until death do you part?"

"Ask her," said Earl. "I am not at liberty to tell."

"Well, tell me what you said, then. Did you say like as Sir Algermon Sidney said, in the book I was reading the other day: 'Behold me, darling, at your feet. I offer you the life-long worship of my heart. Bid me rise, to live in the beauty of your glorious eyes, or I will run my sword through my body, and never look upon the sunlight of heaven more."

"Well, what did the lady say?" Earl inquired, with interest proportioned to the last clause.

"Say!" echoed Flossie scornfully. "She told him she was in love with Sir Gilbert Harrington, and then he got mad and went away vowing he would be avenged for his blighted affections."

"Now tell me, Earl, how you asked the momentous question. I want to know."

He laughed gayly, and slipping his arm around her waist, said mockingly:

"My dear, inquisitive little cousin, I will tell you. I said:

"" My eyes, how I love you!
You little sweet dove you,
There is no one above you,
My beautiful darling.

"Quite Grecian your nose is, Your cheeks are like roses,— So delicious—Oh, Moses!"

But he got no further, for Flossie boxed his ears

and sprang away from him, saying indignantly:

"Earl Whitney, I think you are just as mean as ever you can be to tell me such a falsehood as that, when I was so good to you, too, and played over, 'Drink to me only with thine eyes,' three whole times. But that is all the thanks matchmakers get. I'll never help you again, and I don't love you one bit, so I don't."

And she sped rapidly to the house, followed by Earl's mocking laughter.

CHAPTER XII.

LOVE'S THREAD OF GOLD.

"Thy lids are the gentle cell,
Where young Love blushing lies;
See! she breaks from the shell;
She comes from thy tender eyes."

The next morning was the one appointed for their journey, and before sunrise Edna was awakened from a sound sleep by a kiss pressed upon her brow, and opened her eyes to see Flossie's rosy face, and hear her say:

"Has my Violet forgotten that we are to start away very early this morning, that we may get to the end of our journey before the day grows hot?"

Edna sprang up, and commenced to make a hasty toilet, assisted by Flossie, who was lavish with praise and criticisms; but never by word or look showed that she knew ought of Edna's betrothal.

Finally, when she was arrayed in a pale blue morning dress, that was elaborately trimmed with lace, and which Flossie pronounced just lovely, and so becoming, they went out into the flower garden, as was their custom, to gather flowers for the breakfast table.

Presently Earl joined them there, and after passing the compliments of the morning, he said to Flossie, who was busily engaged in artistically ar-

ranging a spray of white jesmine and a cluster of violets in Edna's hair:

"Still at your favorite pastime, Flossie?"

It was an unwise remark, as Earl soon felt, for Flossie echoed sarcastically:

"'Still at it,' indeed! Did you suppose I was going to resign in your favor, and never put another flower in her hair because of that?" pointing to his ring on Edna's finger. "You might just as well understand first as last, that whoever gets my Violet has to take me, for I won't be separated from her."

"A woeful incumbrance," said Earl, laughing.
"However, I trust that time will tame even such a little spit-fire as yourself."

Edna's eyes were demurely cast down, but her cheeks were flushing hotly; and Flossie pointed to them, saying:

"I believe you told the truth last night, when you said: 'Her cheeks are like roses, so delicious—Oh, Moses.'"

"Flossie!" cried Earl, amusement and surprise in his voice, "what spirit of mischief does possess you?"

She promptly replied, "I have been playing guardian angel to a pair of foolish lovers, and I feel rather elated at my success; but as you do not seem to appreciate my company, I will discreetly take my leave."

And before they could stay her, she was half way to the house, gayly singing:

"'And for bonnie Annie Laurie, I would lay me down and dee.""

Looking into Edna's eyes, Earl saw they were full of tears, in striking contrast to her smiling lips.

"What is it?" he inquired fondly. "Have her gay words wounded you, my tender dove?"

"No, oh, no," she replied, while a shower of tears

fell upon the rose she was picking to pieces.

"My tears seem very near the surface to-day. Perhaps it is because of the sadness of my early life, but I can bear sorrow more calmly than joy."

Earl took the rose out of her hand, saying:

"This flower will be forever sacred to me, because showered with your happy tears; God grant I may never cause you to shed unhappy ones. But tell me, little girl, are you very glad that you are going to see your mother to-day?"

"Yes, I suppose so—Oh, I don't know. Earl, will you think me very wicked, if I tell you that I do not love my mother very much—not half as well as I do aunt Nellie? In my childhood I lost all respect for my mother, and it is in vain I tell myself that she is leading a different life now, that she is now a faithful child of God. In vain I tell myself that God hath said: 'Honor thy father and thy mother.' I have a tender commiseration

for her, for I know she has drunk the cup of sorrow to the dregs. I pity her with my whole heart, and am full of remorse when with her, that I cannot return her love; but I cannot love her as a child should love her mother. I long ago forgave her cruelty to me, yet I shrink from her caresses. I presume if I had lived with her more, in late years, I should feel differently; but I was only five years old when she married Mr. Slater, and from that time on I have no pleasing memories of my mother. Oh, how frightened I was the first time I saw my mother drunk. If you had been mistreated as I have been, I think you would not wonder that I am a monomaniac upon the subject of intemperance. My mother has beaten me until I was too weak to stand, and then she would spurn me with her foot. I have seen a loved brother die from neglect and cruel treatment. Do you see that scar," she said, showing a long scar upon her white arm. "My step-father gave me that, because I refused to wait upon a customer at the bar; the blood trickled to the floor from the cut, but my mother never interfered. They disagreed upon many subjects, but were agreed upon mistreating my brother and me."

Earl was white to the lips. "I shall hate her all my life," he said.

"No," she replied, "perhaps I ought not to have told you, I never told anyone before; somehow the words seem to come against my will. I have

learned to hate the sin, and not the sinner; and mother is so sorry for the past, and follows me with such yearning love, that unconsciously the tears spring to my eyes; and I vow anew that I will spend my whole life in helping to suppress this evil, that has embittered my childhood, caused my brother's early death, and wrecked my mother's life. I mean to be as kind to my mother as circumstances will permit, but she has herself to blame, if the impressions she made upon my childish mind outlive all others."

They were moving towards the house now, and Earl said: "I think you have much cause for your hatred of intemperance. I abhor it myself; but I believe a man may indulge in moderation, without injury to himself or others. A strong will and self-respect will prevent him from becoming a drunkard."

"Yes," she replied, "but strong drink takes away the will and self-respect, and thus the citadel is left unguarded. Doubtless all those who are now confirmed drunkards, began by thinking just as you do, that they had too much self-respect ever to get drunk. But that reminds me of an amusing circumstance that once occurred in the life of Nebraska's great temperance lecturer. He was once speaking in an opera house to a large audience, and during the course of his lecture he made the assertion, that no man ever drank in moderation

any length of time, without finally becoming a confirmed drunkard.

"A great, tall fellow rose in the back part of the house and said: 'I am a living testimony that your statement is false. I have drank a glass of whiskey every day of my life for forty years, and was never drunk in my life.'

"To be sure he had no testimony to prove the truth of his statement, but it placed the lecturer in a novel position, and his audience was filled with wonder, to know how he would extricate himself. However, he seemed in no wise abashed, but quietly surveyed the speaker a moment, and then said:

"'I will tell you a little story, my friends, which may perhaps explain the singularity.

"'Once two negro men were chopping wood beside a small stream, and at noon they sat down upon its bank to eat their dinner. The stream seemed to be full of fish, and one, more bold than the rest, would swim near the bank and eat the crumbs which the men tossed him. Finally one of the men conceived the brilliant idea of dipping the crumbs in whiskey, and thus make the fish drunk so they might capture him. This they proceeded to do, but without avail. At last the other man said:

"'I say, Pete, you'se a fool, to waste all that good whiskey on that fish. A fish hain't got no brains, and you can't make a thing drunk, unless

it's got brains.' 'Perhaps, my friend,' said the lecturer, bowing, 'that may explain the singularity in your case.' The tall man made no reply, but rushed out of the house, followed by the shoutings and derisive laughter of the audience."

"I don't envy him his notoriety," said Earl, laughing. "Nevertheless, he may have told the truth."

"I do not believe it," said Edna. Thereupon a laughing argument ensued, which lasted until they were summoned to breakfast.

Immediately after breakfast they started on their journey; it was a very pleasant trip to them all; and Earl and Flossie vied with each other in merriment and repartee.

But we will precede them a little in their journey, and renew our acquaintance with Mrs. Slater.

She has changed much since we saw her last. Remorse has stamped its impress upon her face, and though but little more than forty years of age, her hair is almost as white as her mother's. During the years that have intervened since we last saw her, she has supported herself by sewing for the villagers. Life seems very dark and dreary to her. Her only gleam of sunshine comes with Edna's occasional visits, and yet they bring pain, too; for she cannot ignore the fact that her child does not love her. And while in her heart she almost worships the beautiful creature, whose

sweet young face so vividly recalls the memory of the girl's father, Mrs. Slater sees Edna shrink from her touch, and realizes only too forcibly, that all the love and gratitude of the girl's young heart is given to her new protectors, and her mother is only associated in her mind with the unhappy past.

Through the dim vista of memory, which had been so beclouded by intemperance, Mrs. Slater could faintly discern that she had been unkind to Edna in those sad, dark years, when she was almost insane with trouble and drink, and she moaned in agony when she remembered it. "But oh," she wailed, "if the child only knew how I love her! if she only knew that I would freely give my heart's blood, to wash from her memory her unhappy past; that I pray for her every hour of my life; that she fills my thoughts by day and my dreams by night, surely she would not meet me as she does, without one ray of gladness in her face, and leave me as unmoved as if going away for an hour's walk."

She deserved it all, she knew; had she not embittered the sweet fountain of her darling's whole childhood, and impressed on the innocent heart of her child a frightful image of herself?

Sleep would not visit her eyelids the night previous to Edna's visit; she tossed restlessly upon her pillow, fought with the dark phantoms of the past, and yearned with irrepressible longing for one kiss of love from the lips of her child.

The miserable woman lifted her arms Heavenward in the darkness and prayed:

"Oh, my God! help me to regain a little of the love I have lost. I know that I have sinned, but I have also suffered. Oh, merciful Father, help me to gain my child's love. I ask for none of the riches or blessings of earth; no other joy, only her love, only her love." She kept repeating the words, as if they were the burthen of some song.

At last she fell into a fitful slumber; when she awoke day was dawning. She hastily arose, for there was yet much to be done before her visitors came. For months every cent that she could spare had been spent to brighten the appearance of her home, in anticipation of this visit; and yesterday had been spent in baking and preparing to entertain their guests well; for Edna must have no occasion to be ashamed of aught in her mother's home.

By ten o'clock everything was completed to her satisfaction; and she dressed herself in a neat black lawn, scrutinizing her face in the mirror, and wondering if Edna would think her old and ugly.

She would not compare favorably with Mrs. Evert, she thought, jealously.

When her toilet was completed she went out on the front porch, where her mother sat, anxiously watching for the arrival of their visitors.

Looking down the street, Mrs. Slater descried a

carriage in the distance, which she recognized as Dr. Evert's.

Her heart began to palpitate hurriedly, and such a trembling seized her, that she was obliged to go into the house and try to overcome her emotion.

She heard the carriage stop at the gate, and heard her mother exclaim, joyously, "They have come, Gertrude."

Then she heard the sound of merry voices and gay laughter nearing the house; and she went to the door just as Edna stepped upon the porch, followed by the others.

How like to her father the girl grew!

Mrs. Slater felt her heart give a violent leap and then stop, as if it never meant to throb again; and in another moment she was pressing her child to her bosom; but felt even in that moment of joy that Edna scarcely returned her caress, and was anxious to be free from her loving clasp. Almost unconsciously, Mrs. Slater greeted the others and led the way into the little parlor; but before she could offer her guests seats, she was so overcome with emotion, that she sank trembling into a chair and covered her face with her hands, while great tears trickled through her fingers. Then hastily rising, and begging them to excuse her a moment, she left the room.

Edna looked after her in vague wonder, touched a little by her mother's evident emotion. Perhaps Mrs. Evert more truly understood Mrs. Slater's feelings than any one else; but all were moved, and Earl, whose sensitive temperament so readily entered into the feelings of others, longed to follow her and strive to comfort her.

He had come to her house with his heart full of bitterness toward her, and felt, as he had told Edna, that he should hate her mother all his life. But he could no more have censured this sad-faced woman, even in thought, than he could have given a blow to one who was already stricken to the death.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN OLD ENEMY AND NEW TERRORS.

After having spent a very pleasant visit in Taylorville, Edna and Flossie returned home. On the afternoon of which we write, Dr. Evert was absent, Earl had gone to Rochester, Mrs. Evert was taking an afternoon nap, and Flossie was busily engaged in painting. Edna watched her for awhile, then picked up a volume of poems, and went out on the lawn, and sat down in the shade to read.

It was about five o'clock in the afternoon, and the air was full of that sultry heat which usually betokens a sudden storm.

The heat was so intense that even poetry failed to take its accustomed hold upon her mind and heart. Finally a low growl from Leo, who was lying at her feet, caused her to look up, and she saw the figure of a man coming rapidly toward her. Her heart gave a sudden leap of fear, for she perceived it was her step-father. An unreasonable alarm took possession of her, and never in her life, even when she had suffered the utmost cruelty at his hands, had he seemed to her such an object of terror as he did now. Leo seemed to feel that his mistress was in danger, for he began to show his teeth and growl ominously.

Slater had not changed much since Edna had last seen him; but his face bore the impress of

continued indulgence in evil ways; she could see that the old, reckless look had deepened; and she knew, too, that he was under the influence of liquor, although his steps were steady.

She arose as he drew near; her face was deadly pale, and with one hand she held Leo by the col-

lar.

Slater paused when within a few feet of her, warned probably by Leo's fierce growl.

"What is the matter, girl?" said he. "You don't think I am a ghost, do you? Perhaps you thought I was dead, and have been mourning all these years over the loss of your loving father." He laughed derisively.

"What, you still think I am a ghost? Don't stand there staring at me like that; it isn't very flattering. I don't look like a resurrected corpse, do I?"

Edna's color was coming back to her cheeks now, and she replied scornfully: "No, I was only filled with wonder at the audacity you have evinced in coming here. What do you want?"

"O, nothing in particular. As I was passing along the road I saw you sitting here, and I thought I would stop and speak to you, for the sake of old times. I knew you would be glad to see me; quite expected you would run and meet me while I was yet a great way off. Come, now, confess that you are delighted to see me once more."

"Is it likely," she said bitterly, "that I would be glad to see you who made the memory of my childhood a horror to me? Who deprived me of a home and all that makes life worth having? Was it not you who dragged my mother down to your own level; and, by your cruelty and her neglect, crushed out my brother's life?"

She saw that his face was flushing angrily, but she went on recklessly: "I wonder you dare to shut your eyes for sleep, with such a load of guilt on your soul; I truly believe there are men condemned to penal servitude for life, who are less guilty before God than you are."

He strode toward her with clenched fist, saying, hoarsely: "Perhaps you have forgotten that I can strike a heavy blow when I try?"

"I have not forgotten," she replied, scornfully, "that you are always ready to strike the defenseless. But I know your cowardly nature too well not to be aware that you will not come a step nearer, when I tell you that if you do so I will release my dog, and he will successfully defend me from a human brute."

Slater had stopped only a few steps from her, and his expression and attitude betokened intense anger.

"I did not come here to be insulted," he said, "and will not be, not if you have forty dogs. I have something here that will be a match for your

dog, I think," and he pulled a revolver from his

pocket.

To Edna's intense relief she saw Earl coming toward them, and she said: "Yonder comes Dr. Evert's nephew; I imagine you would not like to be seen threatening me with a revolver. It would not be very pleasant to be arrested."

Slater replaced his revolver in his pocket just as Earl reached them. "No, that wouldn't suit my book now, so I guess I won't stop longer, as you are inclined to be disagreeable. I only meant to stop and see you for the sake of old times."

"What is it, Edna?" said Earl, hurriedly. "Has

this man been annoying you?"

Then, as she did not immediately reply, he turned to Slater, saying, impatiently:

"What is your business here, sir? I demand an

answer."

"I came to see my daughter, there," Slater replied doggedly. "It isn't a criminal offence, is it, for a man to want to see his child?"

Edna, seeing the surprise in Earl's face, said: "He is my step-father."

Earl's anger blazed in an instant; he said: "Have you not already brought sufficient misery into this girl's life, without further tormenting her with your hateful presence? If you had one grain of manliness left, you would never come near one you have so deeply injured. I advise you to leave here immediately; and if it should ever occur to

you to return, please remember that I am almost always here; and I have a good stout arm, aided by all that science can do to teach a fellow how to plant blows to the best advantage."

"I am going," said Slater, sullenly, "not because I am afraid of the arm you brag about, but because I intended to go any way; but first, let me tell that girl, that if she cares anything for her mother, she would better go to her, for she needs her attention."

He moved slowly away, and Earl watched him with angry eyes; then turned, to find that Edna had sank back upon the seat, pale and trembling.

"Oh, Earl, what do you suppose he meant by the remark he made about mother!"

"Nothing, I imagine, except that he hoped to alarm you. Evidently he succeded in that, for you are trembling like a frightened bird."

"I think what he said about mother frightened me more than anything else, for his words seemed to convey a hidden meaning."

"Well," said Earl, soothingly, "I would not worry about it. It is my impression he said that because he failed to annoy you otherwise; however, I would be very sorry if anything unpleasant should happen to your mother. I think I never met a person who claimed my sympathy as she unconsciously did; and she seemed so fond of you, my darling, that I forgave her the past, because, 'to her that loveth much, much shall be forgiven.' Those are holy words, and I that speak them am

not a righteous man; but they seem to me to suit your mother's case."

While they were still talking the darkness began to gather, and the clouds which had been lowering threateningly in the west, came up almost in an instant of time; while peal on peal of thunder seemed to shake the earth, and great drops of rain began to patter down.

Edna arose in alarm.

"Why," cried Earl, "how careless of me not to notice that the storm was upon us."

Then hastily taking off his coat, he threw it around her shoulders, saying: "Now run, or you will get wet."

She protested against taking his coat.

"Foolish little girl," he said, "come on, or we will both get wet."

They had a wild run across the lawn, and rushed up on the veranda, breathless and laughing, just as Homer Atwood came running in from the stable, where he had left his horse.

"Hello, Atwood!" cried Earl, "did you bring this storm?"

"Quite the contrary," said Homer, laughing; "the storm brought me. I was returning from the city and reached here just in time to save myself from a wetting."

"Well, it is a true saying," said Mrs. Evert, who had come out on the veranda, "that 'it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good.' See it veri-

fied. That wind blew up the rain cloud; thus securing us Homer's presence."

"Edna, did you get wet?" Earl inquired.

"No," she replied. "Your coat protected me; but you are wet; you ought to change your clothing immediately."

"Only a few drops of rain," he said, "that

won't hurt a strong, healthy fellow like me."

"But if you pay no attention to the laws of health, you will not long remain a strong, healthy fellow."

Mrs. Evert laughed.

"Edna is a stickler for the laws of health, and to that fact the doctor attributes the perfect health which she enjoys. He says that if the rest of the world were as careful as she, there would remain little work for physicians to do."

"I hold it my duty," said Edna, "to preserve my good health. And I have not lived so many years in the family of one of the best physicians in the state, without picking up some stray bits of information."

"You should see Edna's doctor book," said Mrs. Evert, smiling. "She keeps a memorandum of the doctor's manner of treating the diseases most prevalent, and says that if she should be taken sick while at school, she could prescribe for herself. The doctor always laughs at her, but I believe in his heart he is proud of her confidence in his professional ability."

"Has uncle Wilfred returned yet?" Earl inquired.

"No," Mrs. Evert replied. "And I feel very uneasy; his horse is so spirited, I always feel nervous when he is away in a storm. Besides I had a frightful dream a little while ago, which shook up my nerves terribly. I had lain down on the sofa, and I fell asleep. I thought I heard the doctor call me as if he were in distress, and I could hear him moan, oh so pitifully; I awoke terribly frightened, and my nerves have not calmed down yet."

"Why, aunt Nellie," cried Earl, laughing. "I had no idea you were so superstitious. I warrant you were lying in an uncomfortable position, which

caused your disagreeable dream."

"I am not superstitious," she said stoutly. "I only said I had been frightened in my dream, and still felt nervous. But I won't stay here to argue with you, you naughty boy, but will go and see if the cook has anything good for your supper, which may please you better than to hear about my dreams."

She had just gone in, and the others were still standing on the veranda, watching the rain, which was falling in torrents, when they saw Duke, Dr. Evert's horse, coming down the road at a tremendous pace. His sides were heaving, and his eyes were wild and staring. He was dragging after him the remains of the demolished buggy, and it

needed but one glance to ascertain that an accident had occurred.

Homer sprang off the veranda, saying: "I fear Dr. Evert has been injured; I will get my horse and go and see."

Earl paused long enough to say: "Edna, don't be frightened. Go in the house and do not tell aunt Nellie of this, but try to detain her in there, until we ascertain what has happened." Then he sprang out after Homer, and in another minute she saw them mounted and riding as if for their lives in the direction whence the runaway horse had come.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LIGHTNING FLASHES EVIL TIDINGS.

With trembling steps Edna went into the house. She had not yet recovered from the fright her step-father's presence had caused her, and now she trembled, knowing not what new evil had befallen them.

She found Mrs. Evert busy giving directions concerning supper. Flossie came in immediately, saying:

"Hasn't papa come in yet? I heard him come home. He was driving at a terrible rate, and I didn't wonder much at his driving fast. Poor papa! to have to be out in such a rain as this!"

Edna's face was very pale and Flossie ex-

"Why, Violet, what ails you? You look as if you had seen a ghost."

"That is what my step-father told me this afternoon," said Edna.

She readily perceived that a recital of his visit would account to them for her pale cheeks, and at the same time chain their attention, until it was ascertained how much cause there was for alarm.

"Your step-father?" said Mrs. Evert in surprise.
"What do you mean, Edna?"

Then she told them of his visit, in detail, trying to gain time.

Mrs. Evert crossed the room and caressed Edna,

saying:

"My dear child, I am very sorry this has occurred. I hoped you would never be annoyed by him again. I will tell the doctor of this, doubtless—"

Just at that moment Edna heard Earl, at the front door, calling for her. She went readily to him, saying:

"Did you find him Earl? Is he hurt?"

"Yes," said Earl sadly, "he is hurt; but he is conscious, so it might have been worse. We do not know what the extent of his injuries is, but it is quite certain one of his arms is broken. Please go tell aunt Nellie as gently as you can. I must make preparations for bringing him home."

A thick darkness covered the earth like a pall; and the trees moaned and swayed beneath the terrible gusts of wind and rain. "Oh, how horrible!" said Earl, with a shudder. "To think of uncle being wounded, and lying by the roadside in the darkness and this pouring rain."

Edna re-entered the dining-room, and explained to Mrs. Evert, as gently as possible, what had occurred.

Flossie wept with grief and fright, but Mrs. Evert, though very pale, set about gathering to-

gether the necessary articles to make the ride home as easy as possible to the sufferer.

When Earl entered to announce that the carriage was waiting, Mrs. Evert said:

"I will go with you, Earl. In our absence the girls must make all needful preparations."

While they are going to bring Dr. Evert home, we will go back a little in our story, and ascertain how the accident occurred.

Dr. Evert had been driving rapidly homeward, hoping to escape the approaching storm. Just about two miles from home was a long, covered bridge, which was dark enough on the brightest days, but it looked exceedingly gloomy now, beneath the lowering sky.

When the doctor had driven about half way through the bridge, a man sprang out and caught the horse, with the usual demand of the foot-pad:

"Your money or your life."

Dr. Evert readily recognized the man, even in the waning light, and he exclaimed in surprise, "Slater!"

"Oh! you know me, do you? Then I guess I'll deal with you on your own account. I didn't intend to kill you; but I confess I'd rather do that than have your money. Revenge is sweet, you know. And a man who persuades another man's wife to leave him ought to expect to get killed some stormy night like this."

Dr. Evert heard the click of the revolver, and he

gave Duke a cut with his whip, which caused the high-mettled creature to spring forward with a tremendous bound; at the same time a report rang out on the air, and the doctor felt the bullet graze his cheek. Then report after report followed in quick succession, doing no damage except to further frighten the horse, over which Dr. Evert entirely lost control, though he strove desperately for the mastery.

After plunging wildly along for a short time, the buggy upset, throwing Dr. Evert violently against a small tree, and he instantly lapsed into unconsciousness.

How long he lay there he never knew. When consciousness returned, he was suffering severely, and the rain was coming down in torrents. The darkness was so intense he could distinguish nothing except when lurid flashes of lightning lighted up the scene.

In a short time (but seeming like ages to him) he heard horses galloping down the road.

Perhaps it was some one coming to rescue him, he thought. He feared they would not see him in the darkness, and as they drew near he attempted to call to them, but was surprised to find out how weak he was.

However, they discovered him, and to dismount and reach his side was the work of but an instant.

After ascertaining, as nearly as possible, the ex-

tent of his injuries, Earl returned home for help, leaving Homer with Dr. Evert.

That waiting in the wild, stormy night seemed an interminable length of time to the poor sufferer and his anxious watcher. Finally they saw the others coming, and they were driving at a rate which told those who had been waiting that not a moment of time had been lost.

Mrs. Evert sprang to the ground the instant the carriage stopped, and knelt beside her husband, exclaiming:

"Oh, Wilfred! are you hurt very much?"

"I can not tell," he replied faintly; "I have only strength to be thankful that I am alive. I know one of my arms is broken, and think likely some of my ribs are, but further I can not say."

As soon as he was placed in the carriage, Homer said:

"I will ride to the city for a doctor. Who would you prefer that I should bring?"

Dr. Evert mentioned his preference, and Mrs. Evert said:

"God bless you, Homer, you are a true friend in time of need. I am very sorry you should need to go; your clothes must be very wet."

He replied, "A little more rain can't hurt me now, and I will soon return, for my horse is a good traveler."

They drove home very slowly, for the doctor's injuries would not permit of a rapid gait. When

they arrived there, they found everything prepared for the comfort of the sufferer, and Mrs. Evert felt thankful for Edna's inquiring mind, which had always led her to ask and obtain much information from the doctor, which was very useful now.

In an incredibly short space of time, Homer returned with the city physician, who pronounced Dr. Evert's injuries to be a broken arm and three broken ribs; otherwise uninjured except for a few bruises and the soreness naturally the result of a severe fall. But it would be long before he would be able to attend to his professional duties again, and many of the suffering poor would long for the sight of their old, cheery physician.

Dr. Evert had inherited a large estate, and had married a young lady who, besides possessing many amiable qualities, was also dowered with a large fortune. Therefore it was not necessary for him to practice medicine for a livelihood. He loved the noble profession, but not for filthy lucre's sake, as many a poor man could testify, who, on convalescing, would mention the subject of his bill, and receive the answer,

"Get well, my friend, that is all I ask of you." Adding, "I can always talk with ease of that Country where the inhabitants shall no more say, 'I am sick,' if my patients know that I am not laying up a large bill for them to pay when they get well." And many souls dated their strivings after a higher life to the conversations held with

Dr. Evert at their sick bed. But now the kind doctor, whose heart was ever pitiful for the sufferings of others, must himself suffer many days before they could reasonably expect convalescence.

Homer was anxious to return home, as his clothes were quite wet, and he also feared his mother would be alarmed at his non-arrival; but Mrs. Evert begged him to remain with them, saying she would send a messenger to apprise his mother of what had occurred, and Earl would furnish him with a change of clothing.

To this arrangement he consented, and had just dressed and returned to the sick-room to offer his services in caring for their patient, when there came a loud clanging at the door bell.

Earl went to answer the summons, and when he returned, Edna saw that there was an apprehensive look on his face.

He came immediately to her side and handed her a telegram.

She opened the envelope and read:

"Your mother is dangerously ill. Come at once."

Her face grew pale, and she thrust the telegram into Earl's hands, saying,

"That man was right in saying my mother needs my attention. This is some more of his evil work."

CHAPTER XV,

THE BLEEDING HEART UNVEILED.

For a moment after reading the telegram Edna looked so still and white Earl feared she would faint, and Mrs. Evert drew near to learn the cause of her distress. Earl hurriedly explained, and Edna said piteously:

"Oh, Auntie! what can I do?"

"Go at once, my child," Consulting her watch, Mrs. Evert added: "It is now a quarter till nine; at half past nine the train is due at Rochester. You must endeavor to catch that train; Earl will accompany you."

Edna lifted her eyes to Earl's face with a look which plainly said, "Will you go with me?"

Answering her inquiring glance, he said:

"Certainly, I will accompany you; my place is beside you now, to shield you from danger if need be, and to help you if possible."

He never forgot the grateful look she gave him, as she left the room to prepare for the journey.

After changing her dress for one more suitable for traveling, Edna knelt and implored the help and guidance of Him who has promised to be strength and wisdom to those who seek his aid.

Having laid her sorrows at the foot of the cross, she arose calm and composed.

O, that sublime faith! by which the child of

God overleaps the barriers of distance and mortality, and converses with the King of kings and Lord of lords.

As Edna was about to leave her room, ready for the journey, Mrs. Evert came in, and kissing the young girl tenderly, said: "My dear child, I am deeply grieved that this fresh trouble has come upon you; but I know that you will bear it bravely, as becomes a child of God; not forgetting that prayer brings all blessings from the skies, and though the dark, cold river of death divides us from our Savior, yet even the lightest whisper will be heard by him."

Laying a roll of bills in Edna's hand, Mrs. Evert continued: "Here is some money which you may find very useful in caring for your mother; if you should need more while there, do not hesitate to notify me."

"O, Aunt Nellie!" Edna said, with tears in her eyes, "you are always so kind to me. How can I ever repay your tender care? I believe that you are the best friend God ever raised up for a fatherless girl."

"Well, my dear, I think if need were, my love for you would stand a stronger test than that imposed by the giving up of a little money which never cost one effort of mine to gain, and which I will never feel the loss of. You occupy in my affections the position of a dearly loved daughter, and we intend you shall in everything share equally with Flossie."

Edna's eyes were suffused with tears as she replied, "I can never hope to requite your kindness, but I would be most unworthy did I not endeavor to comfort other desolate souls as I have been comforted." They were descending the stairs now, and Earl, who was standing in the lower hall, exclaimed:

"Hasten, Edna, the carriage is waiting, and we have barely time to catch the train."

She went into the room to bid Dr. Evert a hasty good-bye, and Homer thought he never saw her look so beautiful before.

Her black dress set off the pallor of her cheeks, which were usually so daintily tinted, and as she witnessed the suffering of him who had so long been her friend and protector, tears of sympathy sprang to her eyes and trembled on her long black lashes. Yet withal, her face wore the calm, tender sheen of prayer, and looking at her thus, Homer's heart cried out for the love of this peerless maiden, as the greatest blessing earth could hold for him; but he calmly pressed her hand in bidding her good-bye, and expressed, in a few well chosen words, his sympathy for her in her trouble. Then saw her depart in the wild, stormy night, with all the powers of his soul centered in one prayer, that God would bless this girl, who had grown so strangely dear to him.

He never for an instant thought of the possibility of her being engaged to Earl; perhaps if he had, his heart would have throbbed more heavily than it did.

What a wild night it was, making their unknown sorrow seem yet more ominous, by the brooding darkness.

They reached the depot just in time to catch the train, and soon passed over their fifteen mile journey, and obtained a hack to take them from the depot to where Mrs. Slater lived.

As they drew near the familiar place, Edna's anxiety became intense.

"Oh, Earl!" she said, "suppose we should be too late. My heart is filled with remorse that I have not loved my mother better. The last time I was here, it seemed as if she thought I had ceased to love her, and it was breaking her heart. I did not realize how dear she is to me until it seemed probable that I might lose her; and now nature asserts her claims."

The hack stopped at the gate, and Earl said, with an exquisite thrill of tenderness in his voice:

"My sweet, holy dove! would to Heaven I could shield you from this sorrow by bearing it myself. I had hoped to be able to protect you from all the storms of life, but here I am powerless, and God alone can help you."

Then he led her to the open door, where her grandmother stood waiting to receive them.

She clasped Edna in her arms, and with tears stealing down her cheeks, exclaimed:

"Oh, I am so glad you have come! I feared you would not get here to-night. Your mother keeps calling for you all the time."

Edna said, reproachfully:

"Oh, Grandma, why didn't you send for me sooner?"

"I wanted to," she replied, "but until your mother became delirious, she insisted you should not be sent for. She believed she was going to die, and when I wanted to dispatch for you, she said: 'No, you must not. I would be glad to clasp my child in my arms, and ask her to forgive the past; but that would only grieve her, and I have never sown aught but thorns in her pathway. When I am dead, you may send for her; and tell her my last conscious moment was spent in praying for her and blessing her. Tell her I died in the full assurance of God's forgiveness; and I hope when she stands beside my lifelesss form, she will forget the sorrowful past, and remember me only as I was when she was a little child, before my life was cursed by sin."

Edna could bear no more, but sped fleetly into her mother's room, and kneeling beside the bed, her tears fell fast upon the bruised, feverish face of the sufferer.

"Oh, Mother, don't you know me?" she cried in alarm.

"Edna has come, Gertrude," said her grandmother, gently.

Mrs. Slater's mind had drifted far beyond the shore of reason; but that beloved name still had power over her wandering mind, and seemed to recall her last conversation with her mother.

She gave a weary gesture and said, pathetically: "No, Mother, you must not send for Edna, not until I am dead;" then shuddering, "O, it is so cold and dark here, and the rain beats pitilessly upon me; but thank God, my darling walks in the sunlight."

CHAPTER XVI.

"COMING EVENTS CAST THEIR SHADOWS BEFORE."

"And the strange inborn sense of coming ill,
That oft-times whispers to the haunted breast,
In a low tone which naught can down or still,
'Mid feasts or melodies a secret guest;
When dost that murmur wake, that shadow fall?
Why shakes the spirit thus? 'Tis mystery all!"

Mrs. Slater's mind had wandered so far beyond the shore of reason that her faithful watchers feared that nothing would ever recall her to a sense of earth.

She seemed as one groping in the darkness and calling pitifully for help. Recognizing no one, she clung to Earl's hand and begged him not to leave her. Calling him Oscar, she cried pathetically:

"Oh, don't leave me again; I have been out in the rain ever since you went away. You won't leave me alone in the storm, will you?"

Her terror and despair seemed so real that the eyes of her nurses were often wet with tears.

Once when standing near the head of the bed, Edna was weeping bitterly, and some of the pearly drops falling upon her mother's face, Mrs. Slater put up her hand and wiped them away, saying, piteously:

"Don't you see how it always rains on me? But, thank God, the sunlight always falls on my darling. Do you know my daughter? She is the lovliest girl ever was seen, and she always walks in the sunlight. I would be content to walk alone in the darkness, if I had but her love, only her love," repeating the words more and more softly, until they died away in a whisper, "Only her love, only her love."

As time went on, she spoke only in disconnected sentences, without one gleam of reason.

The doctors pronounced her malady inflammation of the brain, caused by a violent blow upon the head.

Edna's grandmother explained to them, that on the morning of the catastrophe she had been absent from home for a short time, and on returning found Mr. Slater there engaged in angry dispute with his wife. His tones were loud and threatening; and just as she entered the house, he struck Mrs. Slater a violent blow across the head with his revolver, which caused her to fall insensible to the floor. During the excitement that followed, he made good his escape; but it had been long before consciousness returned to Mrs. Slater, and then it only lasted a short time ere fever set in, and she lapsed into delirium.

The medical information that Dr. Evert had imparted to Edna was of invaluable aid to her now, and she nursed her mother with the steadiness of one trained to the care of sick persons.

Remorse lay heavy on her heart, and her cheeks

gradually grew whiter and whiter, as her mother's case became more hopeless.

Earl importuned Edna to have a hired nurse, but she put out her hand with an appealing gesture.

"Hinder me not; this is the only atonement I can make." And Earl respected her wishes and said no more, but strove to lighten her duties as much as possible.

The attendant physician had said the case was hopeless, unless the patient could fall into a natural slumber; but day after day and night after night passed by, and still she tossed feverishly on her pillow. Opiates seemed to have little effect, for, through the slumber induced by them, she moaned pitifully, and her watchers longed and prayed that natural sleep might visit her.

After days and nights of weary waiting (during which time Edna could scarcely be persuaded to leave her mother's bedside for an hour) the wished-for slumber came. Edna was sitting on the bed bathing her mother's face in arnica diluted with cold water, and the process seemed especially soothing to the patient; finally she arose to a sitting posture and throwing her arms around her daughter's neck, and resting her head upon Edna's bosom, fell into a gentle slumber.

Earl was standing at the foot of the bed, and he and Edna exchanged glances of delight; but as minute after minute ticked away, he saw that the weight was more than the girl's frail form could

bear. He went to her side and softly inquired:

"Could you not lean against me?"

"I dare not move," she replied. "The slightest movement on my part would wake her, and this may save her life."

The moments flew swiftly enough, though seeming quite the contrary to the poor girl, who steadily held her burden, while every nerve was stretched to its utmost tension, in her effort to remain perfectly quiet.

Finally, as the clock indicated that an hour had elapsed since her mother had fallen asleep, Edna felt a ringing in her ears, the room seemed whirling around, and she made an appealing gesture to Earl, who was intently regarding her. He sprang to her support, and the movement awakened Mrs. Slater, who opened her eyes, fixed them on Edna's face and spoke one word: "Blossom."

It was the pet name by which Edna had been called when she was a tiny child.

At that word she rallied and exclaimed, exultantly:

"Thank God! oh, thank God! my mother knows me."

Mrs. Slater smiled wonderingly.

"Have I been so ill I did not know you?"

"Yes, dear Mother, you have, but you have had a good sleep now, and that will save your life. And, oh," she added, sobbing hysterically, "if you had died I believe it would have killed me."

"Thank God," Mrs. Slater murmured, with tears stealing down her cheeks. In a few minutes she fell asleep again.

Edna dropped down beside her mother like a weary child, and both slept until awakened by the entrance of the doctor. He instantly perceived the favorable change in his patient, and said to Mrs. Slater:

"You will get well now, never fear; but you owe your life to good nursing. You have had the most faithful nurse I ever saw."

Mrs. Slater pointed to Edna's white cheeks, and said, mournfully, "So pale."

"My cheeks will regain their color now that you are getting well," said Edna, lightly.

Mrs. Slater's eyes again filled with tears, and she again said softly, "Thank God!" and the happiest smile Edna ever saw on her mother's facedwelt there then.

Mrs. Slater's convalescence was so rapid, that her complete return to health speedily became an assured fact. Earl returned to Dr. Evert's when quite sure there was no more danger to be apprehended.

Those days of convalescence were the happiest Mrs. Slater had known for years; and in the long days of constant companionship with her daughter, many chords of sympathy between them were touched upon, which would strengthen as the days go on.

Once, when Edna was speaking of her literary aspirations and the good she hoped to accomplish, Mrs. Slater said:

"I am so glad, my daughter, that you became a Christian while young. Your religion has grown with your growth, until you not only have strength to walk erect in the Christian's pathway, but you can help others therein. I waited until I had sown sin and sorrow broadcast, and now I can only cling weakly to God's hand, and pray that he will guide my trembling steps into paths of peace and pleasantness at last."

Before her mother had entirely recovered, Edna was obliged to leave, to return to school.

This was her last term, and many weary hours of hard study lay before her. Flossie was to accompany her this year, an arrangement that filled both of the girls with delight.

Edna stayed with her mother until within a few days of the opening of school. When she returned home she found Mrs. Evert had made every preparation that was needed in hers and Flossie's wardrobe, and nothing was left but to enjoy those last few days of home life to their fullest extent.

Dr. Evert was almost well now, and the entire family took daily rides in the big, roomy carriage, the time seeming to them shorter and sweeter, and the scenes appearing more beautiful, because they knew it would be long before they would be able to enjoy them together again.

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The last day of their stay Earl's face wore such a sad, yet tender, wistful look, that Flossie could not refrain from putting the question, "Why so sad and pale, fond lover?" as she passed where he and Edna were standing talking.

Earl turned to Edna with a smile. "I do feel unaccountably depressed over this parting. A sadness is weighing my spirit down, which I can not shake off. I can now fully appreciate Tennyson's beautiful lines:

"Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean, Tears from the depth of some divine despair Rise in the heart and gather in the eyes, In looking on the happy Autumn-fields, And thinking of the days that are no more."

That evening Homer Atwood came over to bid the girls good-bye; and they spent a very happy evening together, with music and song, enlivened by gay conversation, and enjoying themselves with all the gay restlessness of youth, that is ever expectant of, it knows not what.

Once during the evening, on raising her glance suddenly, Edna beheld Homer looking at her with such a thrilling tenderness in the depths of his dark eyes, that a rosy bloom flushed her fair face, she scarcely knew why.

Homer observed the blush, and longed to tell this peerless maiden of his love, and discover if he was beloved in return. But no; he would wait till her school days were over, for the present he would trammel her with no promises; but when her school days were done, if he were so fortunate as to win her love, he would transplant this sweet, white rose to the garden of his heart.

He had likened her in his mind to a white rose, ever since they had planted the rose on her brother's grave. There is a white rose nestling in her raven tresses now, and he longs to possess it, to wear against his heart when she is far away.

Stooping, he said to her:

"Miss Edna, the sin of covetousness has entered my soul. I presume there are other flowers as beautiful, but that white rose, with its green leaves nestling so lovingly in your hair, seems to me the most beautiful flower I ever saw. Are you sufficiently generous to bestow it upon me? It would be a sweet reminder of this happy evening."

"Do you need a reminder?" she smiling inquired. Then she gave him the flower he craved, and he immediately transferred it to his breast.

Earl observed the action and frowned, then smiled. Why should he place any restrictions on her actions, even in thought. She loved him; what did her giving away a flower to another matter? Besides, Homer was her friend; moreover, he had been her brother's friend. He (Earl) would think no more about it. But he could not help wondering if he had not discovered Homer's secret. Surely

his eyes spoke love's language, though his tongue was silent.

After Homer had gone, Edna saw Earl regarding her so sadly and wistfully, that tears involuntarily sprang to her eyes, and she put her hand on his arm, saying:

"What is it, Earl?"

"Will you promenade with me in the moon-light?" he inquired. "You will leave early in the morning, and I wish to have a farewell talk with you to-night."

She cast a scarlet shawl around her shoulders, and slipping her hand through his arm, he led her out into the flower garden, and gathering a cluster of scarlet geraniums, said:

"I will put these in your hair, to replace the flower you gave away; besides, they correspond with the color of your shawl."

She looked at him wonderingly, then she said:

"Was it wrong, Earl, for me to give away a flower?"

"I am feeling unaccountably depressed this evening. This parting saddens me more than I would have believed possible. It seems as if something will arise between us before we meet again, something which will win your love from me. Oh, my darling, how I wish you regretted this parting as deeply as I do. But no, I will not allow such a selfish thought. Be happy, my sweet, holy love,

and may God's angels have charge of thee," he added reverently. "I am not a praying man, my darling, but your sweet face seems to bring God and the angels very near to me, and if I should ever ask aught of Omnipotence, it will be that he bless you, my precious love."

They had paused in their walk, and were sadly regarding each other. Edna clasped her arms around Earl's neck, and he could see that her violet eyes were brimming with tears, and on her long jetty lashes trembled drops that were not the dews of night.

"Why, Earl, what do you mean?" she cried, tearfully. "What could part us but death? You love me, do you not? and I—I could never give you up—never in life. Nothing could ever change my love for you, for it is founded on esteem, and I am sure you will never do aught to lose my respect."

"But, darling, suppose I should do something which you regard as wrong, would you not love me still? They say that woman's love will cling through evil as well as through good report."

Edna regarded him sorrowfully for a moment, then spoke slowly, calmly, as if weighing her words:

"Yes, the love of some women does; but I do not think mine could. The evil report of the world, all the shame and scorn that the world could sweep upon the object of its wrath, could never change my love, as long as I believe you to

be guiltless of sin. But if you had sinned wilfully, knowingly, whether the world regarded it as sin or not, I should cease to love you because I could no longer respect you. But why should we speak so seriously of this? You will never do anything to wound my love. You will never be aught but your noble self—my Earl! my prince! my king!"

She buried her tear-wet face upon his breast and sobbed convulsively: "Nothing can ever part us my Earl, but sin or death. Heaven shield us from both!"

At that moment Homer was kissing Edna's rose; and then he folded it in a tinted paper, on which he had written:

"Given to me September the eighth, by the fair hands of my beloved:

"Sweet flower, you nestled in her hair;
To my fond eyes you are more fair
Than diamond crest, or jewels rare;
Your breath my sweet hopes fan.
You whisper, Love may bring to bless.
Me in my Eden loneliness,
An Eve of truest loveliness—
Heaven's last, best gift to man."

CHAPTER XVII.

"OH! FOR THAT WARNING VOICE."

When next we see our heroine she is sitting by a table, which is lighted by a student lamp, diligently conning to-morrow's lesson. The chill December winds are howling and shrieking without, but it is not the moaning winds, nor the sound of the driving blast against the window pane, which makes her look at the sentences within her book, as though they were written in an unknown language, or held a meaning which her brain could not grasp.

Ever and anon she glances uneasily at Flossie, who is fitfully slumbering by the fire.

At last she lays down her book with a sigh, and crosses over to Flossie, and touches with her cool hand the fever-flushed cheek of the sleeper.

Flossie opens her dark eyes and says, huskily: "What do you want, Violet?"

"Nothing, dear; I fear you are seriously ill, you look so feverish."

"Ugh, I am far from being feverish, I am cold," said Flossie, with a shiver. "Please get me a cup of hot tea; and don't be anxious, dear, it is only a cold; I have felt bad all day."

Edna complied with Flossie's request, and after

tucking her up snugly in bed, sat and thought long and deeply.

Of all diseases which with swift wing sweep over our land, leaving darkness and death behind, diphtheria seemed to her the darkest hued and most appalling. Yet she remembered having heard Dr. Evert say that although it so often proved fatal, it was easily controlled if proper means were employed; but unfortunately, few physicians seemed to understand the disease. When speaking on the subject Dr. Evert had added that he possessed a recipe, which had been given him by an old physician, who claimed that out of one thousand cases in which it had been used, not a single patient had been lost. Edna had made a memorandum of it, and reading it now she knit her fair brow anxiously.

"What should she do?" she asked herself. Dr. Evert claimed that he had used it for years with uniform success; but dared she trust herself to take charge of the case?

She did not really know that Flossie was suffering with diphtheria, and if she called in a physician, he might be one of those whose fatal ignorance on the subject was considered so alarming by Dr. Evert.

At last she mapped out her course and waited for the dawn. Flossie complained of aching head and limbs, and when she attempted to rise, fell back fainting on her pillow.

Edna immediately aroused their landlady and had a messenger dispatched for a physician.

He speedily arrived, and after making an examination pronounced the disease diphtheria.

Edna inquired his method and found it differed radically from the course pursued by Dr. Evert.

"Have you had many diphtheria patients in your practice?" Edna inquired.

"Very many," he replied.

"Have you lost any of them?"

"Yes. It is a very grave disease. I have lost as small a per cent of my patients as any of my profession. It is a very dangerous disease, and often baffles the skill of the best physicians. But I think we can treat the young lady successfully," he added urbanely.

He was preparing to write a prescription, and Edna opened her purse, saying:

"What are your charges, doctor, for coming here and diagnosing the case? The father of the young lady is a physician. I shall immediately telegraph for him, and until he arrives I shall take charge of the case myself."

The physician looked at her in astonishment.

"My dear young lady, you must understand that this is a very dangerous disease, and one that requires immediate attention."

"I shall give it immediate attention," Edna replied. I have a prescription which has been used

for years with entire success. I shall put my trust in that until Dr. Evert arrives."

"A truly wonderful prescription," said the physician, sarcastically. "I wonder that it has never been made known to the medical profession."

"It has been made known," Edna replied haughtily. "Dr. Evert told me he had it published in a medical journal, but from the continued fatality of the disease, he believed little attention had been been paid to it."

The physician would not readily consent to leave the case in Edna's care, and when he took his departure, his anger was too great to be entirely concealed under a polite exterior.

Edna immediately telegraphed to Dr. Evert:

"Flossie is ill. Has diphtheria."

Then she had her prescription filled, and began the treatment advised by him.

Their landlady was dreadfully frightened when she learned there was a case of diphtheria beneath her roof. She had several small children, and she gathered her nurslings into a room in the part of the house most remote from where the sick girl lay; and she herself passed the door with bated breath.

All day long Edna faithfully nursed poor Flossie, who moaned and tossed feverishly upon her pillow, scarcely able to speak above a whisper, and drinking with difficulty her beef tea, which was the only nourishment her faithful nurse would

allow. As evening drew on Flossie seemed a very little better, and fell into a light slumber, and Edna waited anxiously for the arrival of the evening train, which she believed would bring Dr. Evert.

A wild snow storm was raging without, and she thought what a dreary journey it must be to the anxious father.

By and by she heard the whistle of the approaching train, and waited anxiously for Dr. Evert's arrival. What would he say? she wondered. Would he commend, or condemn, the course she had pursued?

Presently she heard a ring at the door bell, and the sound of Dr. Evert's well remembered voice in the hall below; then came the tread of feet on the stairs, and she stepped softly to the door, and was clasped in Mrs. Evert's arms.

"How is Flossie?" exclaimed the anxious mother.

Edna replied: "A little better, I think. But uncle Wilfred can tell you better than I can."

Dr. Evert immediately pressed to his daughter's bedside. Flossie opened her eyes with a startled cry, and in another moment was weeping hysterically upon her father's bosom.

Edna told him all the circumstances connected with the case, and he rested his hand a moment upon her head in benediction.

"Heaven bless you, my brave, noble girl. I re-

membered giving you the prescription, but I feared you would not have the bravery to treat the case yourself; and I greatly feared the result if you did not, for this is a disease which requires careful management from the start."

Edna was pale and fatigued by her long vigil, and after spending an hour in the sweet communing which reunited friends find so delightful, she yielded to their importunities, and retired to obtain the rest she so greatly needed.

Flossie, poor child, had been quite home-sick, having never been away from her parents before, and she declared that the pleasure of seeing them was well worth the pain of being ill.

Dr. Evert stayed with them a few days, then returned home to look after his patients there, leaving ample instruction with his wife in case Edna should be taken with the disease, as he believed she would.

He was right in his surmise, for Edna fell ill in a few days after his departure, but she had the disease in so light a form, it was not deemed necessary to recall him.

Mrs. Evert watched over her with tenderest care, and by Christmas morning she was quite out of danger, and though still pale and weak, she was able to sit at the window and watch the sun peep over the hills, shedding upon the snow-covered earth his lances of crimson and burnished gold.

Mrs. Slater and Earl had not been informed of

Edna's illness, it being deemed unwise to notify them, lest they should be needlessly alarmed.

Beside many Christmas greetings, the morning mail brought Edna a letter and package, directed in Earl's well known hand. She eagerly opened the letter and read as follows:

"Dear Edna:—I send Christmas greeting, also a necklace to adorn the fair throat of her who deserves to be crowned 'queen of love and beauty.' I hope you will honor me by wearing my gift when you graduate. I look eagerly forward to the hour of your return to us, that being but a prelude to that day of greater joy, when you shall become my wife. Believe me, darling, it will be the pride of my life to shield you from sorrow, and give you all the happiness that a tender and loving husband can bestow upon his first and only love.

"Faithfully yours,

"EARL WHITNEY.

"P. S. I am invited to a Christmas dinner, which will be followed by wine and dancing; those amusements which you despise. I would gladly stay away, not because they are unpleasant to me, but because of my love for you; but my mother would never forgive me if I did, for all our set will be there.

"May I ask that you will set my graceless name in your pure prayer? EARL."

Edna opened the package and found it contained a necklace of purest pearls, which called forth exclamations of delight from Flossie. Edna's tears fell fast upon Earl's gift; and Flossie exclaimed in astonishment:

"Why, Violet! what are you crying for?"

Edna smiled sadly and replied: "Oh, I feel so sick and weary, and my heart cries out for Earl; and even such a beautiful present as this can not wean me from my sadness."

If Earl could only have seen his little whitefaced love, as she sat by the window that evening, gazing out into the moonlight, her thoughts far away, thinking of and praying for him.

Where he was gayety reigned supreme. Was it the whisperings of the angel, sent to guard him in answer to Edna's prayers, that caused him to pause and reflect when the wine went round, and turn down his glass when the waiter would have filled it? Perhaps it was; however, his thoughts flew to his betrothed, and her sweet holy life, so in contrast to the lives of those about him, and he thought: "Would it not be love's true loyalty to abstain from the use of that which had wrought so much sorrow in her early life?"

His thoughts were recalled by a mocking voice at his side:—

"Why, Mr. Whitney, you have not turned temperance reformer, have you?"

"No," said Earl, smiling, "but I might be engaged in worse business."

"Oh, Mr. Whitney, please cast your scruples aside at this merry Christmas gathering, and drink a glass of wine with me."

He glanced at the dark-eyed siren, then at the gay crowd around him; all others were drinking, why should he make himself appear ridiculous in the eyes of his friends? He drank as requested, and before he returned home, he drank again and again;—and, oh, shall I record it?—when he reached home his steps were so uhsteady he had to be assisted to his room, where he soon sank into the heavy slumber of the inebriate, and the handsome face, with its crown of wavy golden hair, which Edna longed to see, was flushed with wine, and his ear would have been deaf, even to the music of her voice.

I think his guardian angel must have regarded his slumber with sorrowful eyes, murmuring, "Woe! woe! woe! woe to him who giveth his neighbor drink."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"WHO VEILETH LOVE, SHOULD FIRST HAVE VANQUISHED FATE."

"The leaves of memory seem to make, A mournful rustling in the dark."

"Commencement day at A—— College dawned bright and clear. Edna had been chosen to deliver the valedictory.

Never in her life had she appeared more lovely in the eyes of her admiring friends, than in that, her hour of triumph.

Mrs. Evert had spent money with a lavish hand, in purchasing the graduation dress of her adopted child, and felt amply repaid when she saw how beautifully Edna's graceful form set off the appointments of her rich attire.

Her skirt was of white silk, with a silver sheen of frost work, that glimmered mistily through her creamy overdress of rare silk lace, which was looped up with violets. Earl's gift of pearls completed her attire; themselves scarcely more fair than the snowy throat which they encircled.

A murmur of surprise and pleasure passed over the audience as she came forward to deliver the valedictory. Her face flushed daintily, then her sweet, thrilling voice rose on the air, captivating the ears of her hearers; and her poetic enthusiasm and true, holy views carried their hearts by storm, and at the conclusion of her speech a round of applause, and a shower of flowers, testified to the enthusiasm evoked.

Flossie was wild with delight, and Earl Whitney and Homer Atwood were equally charmed. But in a distant corner of that vast auditorium, sat a sad-faced woman dressed in sable hues, who listened to that speech of gentle eloquence with streaming eyes.

Need I say it was Mrs. Slater?

For many weeks she had worked day and night to obtain money to buy herself a suitable attire, and pay her expenses to A—— to see her daughter graduate.

Mrs. Evert had offered to supply Mrs. Slater's needs, but she had gently but steadily refused; although she keenly felt that the only dress which her poor earnings could buy, might make Edna blush for her mother's poverty. But she would not shame her child; strangers need not know of the tie between them, she thought.

The train on which she came had barely arrived in time for the exercises, and she had slipped into a back seat unnoticed by any of Edna's friends, and waited there trembling with eagerness for the sight of her darling.

When Edna appeared, blooming in grace and beauty, her mother half arose from her seat, with

an exclamation of delight, than sank back pale and trembling.

Why did remorseful memory hold that picture before her eyes to haunt her in an hour like this? That vision of another child of hers, who in his boyish beauty had been as fair to look upon as Edna; and in early years had given even greater promise of intellectual capabilities. And how had she cherished him? Through the dim haze which intemperance had thrown around her memory of of those unhappy years, she saw him returning from school with bleeding feet and fever-flushed face, unnoticed and uncared for. Saw him again, his slender form writhing beneath the lash wielded by his step-father's hand, while she, his only protector, stood by unregarding his plea for help. God forgive her; had she been insane in those days?

Again, Remorse held before her eyes the vision of Archie as he had looked that morning when he had been sent for the cow; and she saw his thin, pale cheeks, with the impress of death already upon them, as he had appeared when, with heaving bosom and feeble steps, he had started to obey his step-father's command, first casting upon her a sorrowful, reproachful glance, as though he would say, "Mother, will you allow me to be sent away to die?"

She could see that reproachful, accusing look now, and it seemed to burn into her very soul.

"Oh God!" she wailed under her breath, "is there any pain like remorse?" What was it Archie had bidden them tell her?

"Tell mother I won the prize, the Crown of Life?" Was there not a reproach contained in the message?

He had won the only thing his mother had no power to deprive him of. The cup of blessings which life held to his lips her hand had ruthlessly dashed to the ground.

Her heart was so oppressed by sad memories that she scarcely noted her daughter's words. When others pressed forward to congratulate Edna, Mrs. Slater started forward with trembling eagerness, then sank back pale and weeping.

No, let Edna enjoy her triumph; she must not be annoyed by the sight of her mother's face, which could only bring sad memories. She had sown only thorns in her child's pathway, while others had sown flowers; they had a right to rejoice with her; but for her, the mother who had sown so liberally to the wind, must she complain if she reap the whirlwind?

Thinking thus bitterly she bowed her head, and many tears were hidden by her thick mourning veil.

At last a familiar voice greeted her in salutation, and looking up she beheld Homer Atwood's sympathetic eyes bent on her, while he said courteously—

"Mrs. Slater, will you permit me to conduct you to your daughter? She wishes to see you."

Edna had not verbally expressed a wish to see her mother, but his loving eyes had noted a tender, wistful expression in her face; and following the direction of her glance, observed the weeping form of Mrs. Slater, and knew that Edna desired to be clasped to the heart of her sad-faced mother. Homer had, as we have already shown, complied with Edna's unspoken wish, and when he conducted Mrs. Slater to her daughter's side, he drew back with tears in his brown eyes, as she clasped Edna in a loving embrace and cried brokenly,-

"My darling! my only child! God forgive me! what have I done! Oh Archie, Archie!"

Tears glimmered on Edna's jetty lashes, as she said:

"God has forgiven you, my Mother, and has washed the stain away; but my brother's blood has long cried out to me, and the remainder of my life shall be devoted to fighting the evil which was instrumental in causing his early death. Then turning to Homer she said gratefully,

"You are so ready to give others pleasure that I believe your kind heart gives you the power to

read one's thoughts."

"I would indeed be dull could I not read your expressive face, and most unkind not to strive to give pleasure to one so easily pleased."

We pass silently over the events of the day, and

beg leave to transport our readers on the wings of fancy, to the home of Edna Carlisle, where a grand party is in progress.

The house and grounds are brilliantly illuminated, and sweet music and merry laughter floats out on the air. Happy groups are gathered on the lawn, while here and there couples wander off by themselves. For

"'Tis the hour when lover's vows
Seem sweet in every whispered word."

Earl and Edna had improved this their first opportunity of conversing alone, and had strolled away to the farther side of the lawn from where the majority of the guests were gathered; and Earl is telling Edna of his loneliness in her absence, and his joy at meeting her again, and Edna listens to the beloved voice once more, and her eyes are wet with joy's sweet dew; and Earl can feel that the dimpled hand resting upon his arm is fluttering like a timid bird.

Homer Atwood and Earl's sister Ivy are approaching them, but Earl's eyes are so absorbed in looking at the lovely face beside him that he does not note them. He is saying: "I have been very proud and happy to-day, my darling—"

Homer hears the last word, "darling," and his heart gives a sudden bound, then painfully labors on. Did he hear aright? he wondered, or was it

the voice of his own heart, which had been so happily singing a song of love and joy.

Could it be possible that Earl was his rival? an accepted lover? How strange that he never thought of it before. His face paled for an instant, and it seemed that all his life blood surged about his heart with an overpowering sense of pain and loss. Then he rallied and thought, I will learn my fate as soon as possible. If my fond hopes must die, their fragrant memory shall but distil sweetness in my heart, and I shall strive to live a life approved by God, and man.

"Ah, well! for us all some sweet hope lies.

Deeply buried from human eyes;

And, in the hereafter, angels may

Roll the stone from its grave away!"

CHAPTER XIX.

"IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN."

"Oh let the solid ground,
Not fail beneath my feet,
Before my life has found
What some have found so sweet.

"Let the sweet heavens endure,
Not close and darken above me,
Before I am quite, quite sure,
That there is one to love me."

Life seemed so bright and fair to Edna now, and her reveries were as sweet as those experienced by the Lotus-eaters. Were not the wearisome hours of absence and study over-past, and she restored to the companionship of those she loved? Ah, life was very sweet, and she gathered the flowers that grew in her pathway and rejoiced in the light of her lover's eyes.

They were very merry at Dr. Evert's that summer. Mrs. Whitney and her daughters were with them, and had come accompanied by Maurice Guthrie, a young man who was paying assiduous court to Beulah. He was a tall, dark man, well versed in the ways and wickedness of the world; a man of perhaps not more than thirty-five years, but he had seen and indulged in more iniquity than many who reach their ten times seven.

Maurice Guthrie possessed the uncommon faculty of being able to go so far, and no farther, in the ways of sin—of always pausing ere he incurred society's displeasure. He had inherited considerable wealth, and being passably good looking and of agreeable manners, he was considered a most eligible suitor by fashionable society.

To Edna this new visitor was exceedingly disagreeable. She seemed to intuitively divine the vileness of his heart, and he soon discovered that his courtly speeches were wasted on this simple girl, who so visibly shrank from the glance of his bold, black eyes. But little did Maurice Guthrie care. He had already decided to marry Beulah; her wit and beauty would make her a fitting mistress for his home, while the large dowry which she would bring, would be a welcome addition to his already large fortune.

So-called "good society" is responsible for many evils in this world, of none perhaps more reprehensible than that inculcated by her pernicious doctrine, that a girl need not expect to find a husband of strictly moral character, and should not inquire too closely into the private life of the man whom she is to marry. The fiat of society being that the bride must possess the graces and virtues of the angels, and if the bridegroom possesses a good bank account, the scales are evenly balanced.

Maurice Guthrie was an atheist. Judging the

world by his own evil mind, he deemed religion but a cloak for wickedness, and morality but an assumption of virtue to attain some coveted end. His witty speeches and sarcasms on this subject made him a dangerous companion to those whose feet were not grounded on the rock.

His doctrines were especially pernicious to one of Earl's temperament. Earl felt this to be true, for he knew that many times he had been led into temptation by Maurice Guthrie, who was so eager to instruct him in the dark ways of so-called "high life."

Earl's better nature revolted against indulgence in sin, and he longed exceedingly for the summer to come, when he would be able to free himself from the companionship of evil associates, and would spend the summer in the pure atmosphere of his uncle's happy home, free from the influences of the wine-cup or the gaming table. He earnestly desired to live a good, true life; to be stainless in word and deed, but having no abiding faith, or steadfast anchor of hope, he drifted helplessly with the tide, and became stranded among shoals and quicksands.

Not from Earl, but from Mrs. Whitney, had Maurice Guthrie received the invitation to accompany them to the country; and Earl heard the invitation accepted with a feeling of anger and despair. Instead of renouncing the man's friendship when he discovered that his influence was evil, Earl did as thousands have done before him, let matters drift along, his better nature continually struggling for the mastery, sometimes victorious, sometimes vanquished, and always hoping to, in some way, be freed from the evil influence.

Why is it that men who persist in walking on quicksands are not content to walk there alone, but are continually striving to force the companionship of those who prefer firm ground?

I see no solution to the problem unless it be that they are possessed by the spirit of Satan, who, having fallen from the heights of bliss, desires to seduce others from a life of joy and allegiance to God.

But we must stop moralizing and hasten on with our story.

A few days after Edna's return home there was a pic-nic at Clear Lake, a spot well adapted by nature for such occasions, and it had become the general resort of pleasure seekers.

The lake was, as its name designates, noted for its clear waters, and nature had evidently blessed the surrounding country with her most loving touch and tenderest smile.

The occasion was one which all felt called upon to enjoy, and upon that day, for many miles around, the farm houses were a decidedly lonely, not-at-home air.

Clear Lake was distant several miles from Rochester, and Doctor and Mrs. Evert, Mrs. Whit-

ney and Ivy, drove over in the carriage, every available space of the vehicle being crowded with well filled hampers of pic-nic delicacies. Maurice Guthrie and Beulah rode in the phaeton, and Earl, Edna and Flossie gave themselves the pleasure of watching the others depart, then mounting their horses they reached the grounds some time in advance of the other merry-makers.

For years Dr. Evert's prescription for Edna and Flossie had been a daily ride on horseback, and it was one which he always insisted upon being observed except in very inclement weather. He had presented them with a pair of milk-white riding horses, and the delight they felt at being the possessors of such beautiful and spirited animals, greatly enhanced, in their minds, the value of the prescription.

On the morning of the pic-nic, Earl rode between them on his uncle's own black riding horse, and they formed a very picturesque group as they dashed past other pleasure-seekers, less happily mounted. But I think on Flossie the eyes of observers rested with the most pleasure. She wore a habit of green and gold, and her dark eyes were sparkling with pleasure, her cheeks glowing with excitement, and her long golden curls, in pleasing contrast to her green habit, were floating out on the wind, the plaything of every summer breeze.

Arriving at the lake the merry-makers abandoned themselves to a day's enjoyment. Swings

had been erected for the delight of the little ones, while the young people climbed hills and explored mossy dells, or formed themselves into boating parties, and skimmed lightly over the surface of the clear, beautiful lake.

Well, there are pic-nics and pic-nics; this was a Sunday-school pic-nic. Why is it that some people have an idea that a religious gathering must necessarily be dull? Does it follow that because the Christian's pleasures are those which harm neither soul nor body, they are without enjoyment? or that they love their friends less because they expect to clasp glorified hands with them in the realms of bliss, and spend an eternity of happiness in their companionship?

At last the snowy linen was spread on the soft, green grass in the shadow of the great trees, and luncheon was served in that informal and most appetizing manner, while the warblers of the wood listened in timid wonder at the gay voices and merry laughter of the invaders of their solitude.

Flossie had smuggled her sketch-book into the carriage, and after the meal was over, she begged Edna to slip away with her in search of a subject for her pencil.

Edna consented, and Homer Atwood, who was standing near, heard Flossie's request, and asked permission to show them a beautiful spot that he had discovered, which he praised so much that Flossie accepted his proffered escort with delight.

After a walk of about ten minutes they reached the shady retreat, and Flossie's artist eyes beamed with pleasure.

The spot well deserved the praise that Homer had bestowed upon it. It was a beautiful, ferny dell, the thick foliage of the over-arching trees permitting only a "dim, religious light" to peep into that flowery spot; and forming a beautiful back-ground for the picture, a rugged cliff uprose, half way up which a small spring sent its tiny stream purling over the mossy boulders, and sparkling in the sunlight, which glimmered mistily through the dense foliage.

Flossie was in an ecstasy of delight, and was almost ready to kiss Homer in her grateful enthusiasm.

"Oh, Violet!" she cried, "you must let me put you in this picture. Surely I can paint you successfully in such a spot as this. You shall be my sleeping beauty. No, that would not suit me, for then I could not paint your eyes. Oh," she exclaimed, casting her arms caressingly around Edna, "I quite despair of ever being able to paint anything as lovely as my Violet."

"I do not wonder," said Homer, smiling; "only Omnipotence could do that."

After much laughing and many gay speeches, Edna was at last seated to the little artist's satisfaction, and then turning to Homer Flossie said, saucily: "You may sit here, too, if you like; you will just count for nothing in the picture."

Homer accepted the seat assigned him, and smilingly watched the fair artist who had suddenly become absorbed in her work. Then he looked at the maiden beside him. Was not this the hour of fate? the time to discover if this peerless blossom was to shed its fragrance in his heart?

Her cheeks were flushing beneath his loving gaze. He took that rosy bloom as a hopeful omen, and his voice grew eloquent with the burden of his great love for her.

Flossie had been busily engaged in sketching the outline of the scene, then she turned to the central figure; but a woeful change had come over the face she loved.

There was no mistaking the sorrowful expression of Edna's face, and was not that a tear that fell upon the dimpled hands clasped in her lap?

Homer was speaking, and Flossie could not hear the low-spoken words; but by woman's true instinct she understood the despair depicted in his face, and tears of sympathy sprang to her eyes. Then hastily brushing them away, she rapidly sketched the features of both, faithfully transcribing the expression of each; and in her joy at seeing the skill she evinced in protraying the gentle sorrow shown on one face, and the despair of the other, she almost forgot to be sorry for the disappointed lover.

After awhile Homer rose to leave and stopped a moment beside Flossie, and smiling sadly, inquired of her success. She deftly placed her hand over his pictured face, while she replied to his question, and noted the agony in the depths of his dark eyes.

Resting his hand a moment on her head in benediction, he said, "God bless you, dear little friend; may you always be happy as now."

And looking up a moment later through her tears, Flossie beheld his vanishing form; but he was not going back to the crowd. No, he spent one dark hour alone in the wood, and who shall blame him if he shed bitter tears over the grave of his buried hopes?

Had not the sweetest blessing of life been denied him? That love which is dearer to the heart than the peace and joy of Eden?

"Daughters of Eve, your mother did not well;
She placed the apple in your father's hand,
And we have read, O wonder! what befell,—
The man was not deceived, nor yet could stand;
He chose to lose, for love of her, his throne,—
With her could die, but could not live alone."

CHAPTER XX.

"TIME TRIES THE TROTH IN EVERYTHING."

"The heart that has truly loved, never forgets,
But as truly loves on to the close;
As the sunflower turns on her god when he sets,
The same look that she turned when he rose."

It hath been said, "The poor make not many friends," and old Mr. Allen had found the proverb to be indeed true. During a long life of poverty, he had found few persons who cared to cultivate his acquaintance; and through two years of continued illness there were fewer still who cared to come into his humble above, to seek to cheer or sympathize with the weary sufferer, or to relieve his tired wife and son of their continued watching beside him. His life had been such an isolated one that few knew him intimately, and none knew of the need he had of help and sympathy.

From the beginning of Mr. Allen's illness, Homer Atwood had been a constant visitor at their house; many times he had spent the whole night watching beside the sick man, and returned home in the morning tired and sleepy, but conscious of having shed a little brightness in a pathway which was all too deeply shadowed. Once his mother said to him,

"My son, you will kill yourself at this weari-

some work; could you not send a hired nurse there?"

"Yes, Mother, I suppose I could; but Mrs. Allen would never consent to give up the nursing of her husband to another except for a little while; besides, he says he rests better with me than with anyone else, for I draw his mind away from earth and suffering; and oh, my Mother, if I have any message of love and joy to carry to the children of men, should I not bear it to the poor, to those who have had no time to see any pleasure, because their lives have had to be spent in a continual struggle for bread? Shall not my mission be to them? to tell them of that Better Country, and of the peace and joy to be found in Christ Jesus?"

And Homer continued to visit Mr. Allen until the end came, always bearing with him temporal, as well as spiritual blessings.

At last, after months of weary waiting, death came to relieve the poor sufferer, and he died with his hand clasped in that of the man who had smoothed his pathway to the grave, and better still, led him to a faith in God, and the life beyond.

On the afternoon of Mr. Allen's death Edna, Beulah, Earl, and Mr. Guthrie drove past the abode of sorrow; they had not heard of Mr. Allen's death, but were out taking a pleasure ride.

Homer Atwood was just ready to enter his

buggy to return home when they passed, and Earl stopped the carriage to speak to him.

Homer came near, saluting them kindly and courteously, and told them of the death which had just occurred within the cottage. It was the first time Edna had spoken with Homer since the day of the pic-nic. She had heard him preach the Sunday following that event, and there had been a pathos and gentle eloquence running through the discourse which had touched the heart, and drawn tears to the eyes of more than one listener. Now he seemed to grieve only for the sorrows of others.

Edna also felt the mystic bond of Christian sympathy, and inquired,

"Is there anything that a stranger might do to show her sympathy and be of some service to the bereaved family?"

"Not now, I think," Homer replied. "But in a few days, when they will doubly feel their loneliness and loss, then your company and sympathy would be a blessing to them."

After they had resumed their ride, Beulah said, "It is a mystery to me that anyone should wish to be a minister. To me it seems the saddest, most gloomy life possible. Oh, I would rather be anything else than a minister."

"And I," said Edna warmly, "think it the highest position a man can fill; to be the bearer of God's message to man; to cheer the sick, and close dying eyes; to comfort stricken hearts, and

to guide wayward feet into paths of peace that end in glory at last,—a life thus spent must be filled with the purest joy, the holiest pleasure a human heart can know."

Maurice Guthrie had been narrowly watching Edna's expressive face during their interview with Homer; and had noticed that his face had first flushed, then paled at sight of her, and Guthrie said in his heart, I know your secret; and when Edna ended her warm defence of the ministerial profession, he said, with a touch of sarcasm in his tones—

"Miss Carlisle, I think you would make an adorable minister's wife; you would enter so heartily into sympathy with his parishioners."

Edna noted the sarcastic tone and her cheeks flushed hotly, as she haughtily replied,

"I believe it is not necessary for me to be the wife of anyone, to be able to 'rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.' That is already my prerogative as a child of the living God."

There was a constant antagonism between Edna and Maurice Guthrie, although veiled by a polite exterior. That antagonism which will ever exist between innocence and evil; light and darkness. She so plainly shrank from him, and her clear, truthful eyes appeared to him to be reading his dark thoughts, and his heart was full of hatred for

her; even the beauty of her face was hateful to him, because indicating such purity of soul.

They had a long drive that day; never turning their horses' heads homeward, until warned by a rain cloud, which began to mutter ominously in the distance. Then they began to drive furiously toward home; but were caught in the rain when about three miles from their destination.

A strong wind was blowing in their faces, which caused the rain, now falling in torrents, to beat into the carriage, and they were glad to take shelter in a cottage by the roadside, belonging to a farmer by the name of Howard.

Mr. Howard had just come in from the field, where he had been making hay, and as they approached he was standing upon the porch, an uncouth figure in brown overalls and blue checked shirt, watching with lowering brow the falling rain which would do so much damage to his outlying hay.

By his side stood his pretty, dark-eyed daughter, dressed in cool white lawn with tiny pink sprays scattered over it. Her hair was combed smoothly away from an almost colorless face, its pallor only relieved by her scarlet lips and large dark eyes.

She retreated shyly into the house when she saw the occupants of the carriage alighting; but her father stayed on the porch and tried to give a hearty welcome to the strangers.

Mr. Howard ushered them into the little sittingroom, introducing them collectively to his daughter Mamie, who greeted them in a shy, nervous manner, which plainly indicated that she was unaccustomed to mingling in society.

The room was very plainly furnished; a rag carpet covered the floor, a few engravings hung on the wall, while in one corner was a table well laden with books, and near by was a work basket containing a blue checked shirt, which Mamie had been making for her father.

She was his seamstress and housekeeper, Mr. Howard's wife having died some ten years before, leaving Mamie motherless at the age of twelve years. She was the living image of her dead mother, and it was also to be feared had inherted her mother's disease (consumption), which had been in the family for several generations.

After conversing a while with her unexpected guests, Mamie withdrew to the kitchen and shortly after invited them out to a well laden tea table, to partake of the repast which her skillful hands had prepared. She was eminently a house-wifely creature, one to whom the care and arrangement of a house was a pleasure; and she presided at the table with an easy grace, that called forth admiring glances from her guests.

She was evidently at ease in dispensing the hospitalities of her home, and Maurice Guthrie's bold black eyes rested on her in undisguised admira-

tion, and his ever ready compliments—which seemed to belong so entirely to that other world to which she was a stranger—called forth warm blushes to her otherwise colorless cheeks.

Toward evening the rain ceased to fall, the clouds drifted away, the sun disappeared in a sea of golden glory, and our friends, expressing themselves pleased with the hospitality extended to them, and hoping to continue the acquaintance thus pleasantly begun, bade gay adieus to their kind entertainers, and drove merrily homeward.

Mamie stood upon the porch gazing after the receding carriage with a sense of loss at her heart. A sadness caused by a glimpse into that other life from which she would ever be debarred by poverty.

How lovely the ladies were, she thought, and how handsome and courteous the gentlemen, especially the dark-eyed one, who had looked at her so admiringly; her cheeks flushed now remembering those glances, then she turned into the house with a sigh.

They had no part or lot in her life; doubtless she would never meet any of them again; why should she stand and sigh for that which was beyond her, she thought; but all the evening her father wondered at the silence of the gay voice, which was wont to sing so sweetly while she went about her work.

Ah, Mamie, if you had but known—but we will not anticipate.

That evening Flossie slipped into Edna's room and begged her to come to the studio, as she had something she wished to show her. Edna smilingly complied; and with an air of great mystery Flossie unlocked the door, saying:

"You remember, Violet, that I refused to let you see the sketch I made the day of the pic-nic? well, it is finished now, and awaits your praise or condemnation."

Then she led Edna to the easel where the newly finished picture rested, noting her surprise with evident enjoyment.

The picture was almost faultless. Faithfully had the little artist transcribed the scene, even to a ray of sunlight that flickered across the curling waves of Homer's bright brown hair, and a pearly tear that glittered on Edna's long, black lashes.

Edna was deeply affected, but seeing that Flossie was awaiting her opinion of it, she said:

"As a work of art it is beautiful, faultless. But dear Flossie, was it kind of you to copy the tenderest emotions of the human heart for the eyes of others to look at?"

Flossie's eyes flashed indignantly, and she replied:

"Can it be possible, Violet, that you know me so little as to suppose I would let any one but yourself see this? I could not refrain from putting such a beautiful scene on canvas. And now that it is completed, I beg you to accept it, a memento of my skill. You have nothing of my work, I believe."

Edna clasped Flossie in a loving embrace, saying, tearfully:

"No, darling, not that picture: paint something else for me. I never want to see that again. All the love I have to give belongs wholly to Earl; but it makes my heart ache to look at that picture, for—

[&]quot;'Of all sad words of tongue or pen, The saddest are these, it might have been.""

CHAPTER XXI.

"THE TRAIL OF THE SERPENT IS OVER IT ALL."

"Thou art my life, my love, my heart, The very eyes of me."

A few days later Edna visited her mother and grandmother, delighting them with her companionship for the space of a week. At the expiration of that time she was sitting in the little parlor one morning, reading aloud to them. Hearing voices without she looked, and saw Earl and Flossie coming up the path. Edna dropped her book and sped with delight to meet them.

"Ah, little runaway," cried Earl, gayly, "we have found your hidden retreat, and have come to fetch you home."

Then clasping both her extended hands in his, and gazing with loving grey eyes into the violet ones so sweetly upraised, said:

"We could not spare you another day; no not one, could we Flossie? We have been singing, 'This earth is a desert drear,' and songs of kindred sentiment, ever since you left us."

Mrs. Slater was glad to see her visitors, for she had taken her daughter's betrothed into her heart of hearts, but she demurred at their errand. "Edna

had been with them so short a time," she complained.

"O do let her return with us," said Earl, persuasively. "My vacation will soon be over, and I must go back to Chicago. When I can no longer be here Edna may stay with you a month, or two, for aught I care."

Then casting a laughing glance at the sweet, blushing face beside him, he added: "When we are married you shall come and live with us all the time."

"I shall be pleased," said Mrs. Slater, smiling gravely, "to come to visit you sometimes, but mother and I will continue to live here. I think it much better for young people to live alone."

It had been arranged that their marriage should take place the following May. Earl's father had made him equal partner in the bank, and their future home would be in Chicago. The course of true love ran smoothly on, not a ripple curled the surface; among the relations there was not one dissenting voice. Earl was so truly lovable, that he would have won his way into Mrs. Slater's affections, even if he had not proven so kind to her during her sickness. As it was, she loved him second only to Edna.

To Dr. Evert and his wife Earl was more like a son than nephew, and doubtless they were not sorry that the large dowry which they meant to bestow upon Edna at her marriage, would not go to enrich the coffers of a stranger.

While, on the other hand, Earl's family thought Edna lovely and lovable beyond comparison, and congratulated themselves that her beauty and talents would add a new luster to the name of Whitney.

Edna returned home with Earl and Flossie, and that homeward drive in the clear moonlight, with these two who occupied the warmest place in her heart, ever remained to her a blissful retrospect, embalmed in memory's choicest perfume. It seemed to her like the mignonette which retains its fragrance after it is withered and dead, and has lost all semblance of former beauty.

The next evening Homer Atwood called at Evert Place. He had so long been a constant visitor there that he feared to change his course now, lest he should be called upon for an explanation. Besides, there was still a sad, sweet pleasure in seeing the girl he loved, even though his love was not returned.

"Strange! that a love-lorn heart will beat With rapture wild amid its folly; No grief so soft, no pain so sweet, As love's delicious melancholy."

The day had been exceedingly warm and sultry, and they had all gone out to sit beside the fountain, which was cooling the air with its delightful

showers, and the full moon, which was rising, shed a sweet witchery upon the scene.

One of Edna's poems had lately appeared in a magazine, and had called forth many admiring comments from the public. They had been speaking of it, and Mrs. Evert said:

"I expect to be very proud of both my girls in days to come; they have each chosen their life work, and I doubt not they will do it conscientiously and well. That they both have talent is beyond question."

"But, Auntie," said Beulah, "what is the use of their choosing a profession like as if they were men, or girls who were obliged to work for a living? For my part, I think it unwomanly to have aspirations that reach beyond the home circle."

"You believe, then," said Mrs. Evert, "that a woman, to fill her allotted sphere, must either be a society woman or a house-keeper. The world is already burdened with the former, and suppose that she had no taste for the latter, that her soul loathes the trifling details of household work, while she possesses acknowledged talents in another direction. Would it not be as cruel to expect her to continue at the work she despises, simply because people have decided that to be her sphere, as to expect the boy, fitted by nature to rule in the senate, to continue to follow the plow, simply because his father was a farmer? Let each fill the place in this world which nature fitted him

or her to occupy, and then, and not till then, will our people lead contented lives.

"Besides," continued Mrs. Evert, "there are women whose native independence makes it a source of grief to them to accept their spending money from the earnings of another, however cheerfully it may be given. To those independent natures a life work is a blessed boon."

"I have read somewhere," said Mrs. Whitney, that a true woman can no more be independent than the clinging ivy vine."

"Oh, that vine!" sighed Mrs. Evert, "I am tired of it, though I acknowledge its poetic beauty. But who admires the ivy as they do the rose, which is its own supporter, and blesses the senses with its beauty and fragrance?"

"But what becomes of the home-nest they should preside over?" said Beulah.

Mrs. Evert replied: "Does it follow that because a woman's mind rises above household drudgery, that she loves her family less? Does knowledge kill the affections of the heart? To the contrary, some of the most loving wives and tender mothers have been women who achieved name and fame in the world without."

"I think," said Maurice Guthrie, "that woman in the home is worthy of all honor and admiration, but I confess that it lowers my estimation of her that she should ever seek to pass beyond that boundary. To my mind, Milton drew a picture of true womanliness when he said, 'He for God only, she for God through him.'"

Homer said warmly: "Milton must have forgotten the teaching of his Bible when he wrote that. There is absolutely no sex in the kingdom of God. Do not the Scriptures say, 'There is neither male nor female, but you are all *one* in Christ Jesus?'"

Edna had taken no part in the discussion, but Homer thought she looked like some pictured saint as she sat there in soft, white draperies, gazing at the rising moon with a dreamy smile upon her lips.

Flossie laid her hand upon Edna's shoulder, saying in a loud, mischievous whisper: "Violet, do wake up and defend us. Tell our fastidious friends that we have not lost all delicacy of feeling merely because you paint pictures with your pen, and I paint them with my brush. Do, dear, and as a reward for meritorious conduct, I will put you in the next picture I paint, and will make your name (or face) immortal."

"Yes, Edna," said Mrs. Whitney, "tell us your thoughts upon this subject. You, who have chosen a work to do, must surely have thought seriously upon this question of woman's work."

Edna answered simply: "I only know that I have consecrated my life, and whatever talents I possess, to the service of Christ, and I cannot believe that He who is full of love and mercy, will despise the work because the worker is a woman."

Maurice Guthrie looked at her with a sarcastic smile upon his face; but to Earl she seemed enveloped in a halo of ethereal beauty, and to be gradually slipping away from him; and involuntarily his hand closed over hers which wore his betrothal ring. Homer observed the action, and a dull pain tugged remorselessly at his heart.

Then Mrs. Evert arose, saying smilingly, "I propose that we lay this vexed question aside, and adjourn to the house and have some music. It is seldom we have the pleasure of listening to such a delightful tenor voice as Homer's, and I, for one, believe in enjoying life's blessings while we may."

They did as she suggested, and after a few songs Homer took his leave. He had called chiefly because he feared that if he failed to visit there as usual, Edna would note the change and grieve over the pain she had unconsciously given him; and he wished to shield her from the knowledge of his grief, lest it cause her disquiet.

Yet when in her presence he could not wholly veil his sadness; and in her manner he thought he could detect a gentle, womanly pity toward himself, as though she knew his heart was darkened with her shadow, and sorrowed knowing it.

It grieved him that he should cause her this unrest, for it was through no fault of hers that he loved in vain; she had never given him any encouragement; but she could no more help being lovable than the flowers which every morning

raise their bright, dew-covered faces to the sun, can help charming the eye with their beauty and fragrance.

That evening when Dr. Evert and his wife were

alone together he said to her,-

"If there were the slightest foundation on which to base such a supposition, I would think Homer had met with some sorrow, but we would surely have heard of it had it been so."

Mrs. Evert replied, "I observed a change in his manner. I have always thought he had the sweetest, happiest laugh I ever heard, but I noticed this evening that there was a ring of sadness in it, as though cumbered by some secret sorrow. Perhaps he is feeling ill from overwork; I heard Mr. Guthrie saying to Beulah yesterday, that he thought Homer must be the prince of fools; and he ridiculed the idea of the possessor of such a handsome fortune being content to live in such a poky place as this; going from house to house, as Homer seemed continually doing, accomplishing nothing by it except to wear himself out, and have these ignorant country people look up to him as though he were a living oracle."

Dr. Evert's eyes flashed angrily, as he said,—

"Mr. Guthrie would do well to emulate Homer's example; or at least refrain from bringing sorrow upon others, if he will do no good in the world."

"What do you mean, Wilfred?" Mrs. Evert in-

quired in surprise.

"Just this," he replied; "this morning I met old Mr. Howard on the road, and he asked me to go and prescribe for his daughter, who has a troublesome cough; and the daily and nightly terror of the old man's life is, that Mamie will go as her mother did-with consumption. Well, when I arrived there, I found her sitting on the porch with Mr. Guthrie leaning over her chair, whispering sweet nothings, I suppose; for she was blushing, and looking up into his face with eyes that seemed to say she thought him a king among men. For my part," added the doctor angrily, "I felt a strong desire to horse-whip him for trying to gain the girl's love, when we know quite well that he is not the kind of a man ever to marry a poor girl like Mamie. He seemed deeply chagrined that I should find him there, and I am quite sure he must have seen in my face the contempt I felt for him, although I put a restraint upon my tongue."

"Well, I am sure I don't know what we are to do about it," said Mrs. Evert. "I heard Beulah wondering the other day what was causing him to be away so much lately; and as she is going in a few days to visit an old school friend of hers, he will have greater freedom of action than ever. I presume he expects to remain here as long as Earl does; I do not wish to be inhospitable, but I heartily wish for his departure."

It was true that Mr. Guthrie had taken to spending much of his time at Mr. Howard's cottage.

He had passed the cottage the next evening after they had been so hospitably entertained there during the rain, and was somewhat chagrined to see Mamie standing at the gate talking to Frank Allen. He readily guessed Frank to be an admirer, as indeed he was.

Frank had loved her for years; but her manner toward him had always been so capricious, that he despaired of ever winning her favorable regard.

Mamie had lived a very lonely life, and having no companions of her own age, her time had been chiefly spent in reading books of a light nature, until her mind was filled with unreal fancies, and she looked at life through a veil of romance.

That Frank Allen loved her truly, she well knew; but he seemed so unlike the heroes in the novels with which her foolish little head was stored, that it almost made her angry to think he dared to love her. Yet she could not help relenting sometimes; for her womanly intuition told her he was at heart a true gentleman, even though his manner was unpolished, and his hands were brown and rough from constant toil.

But from the hour when she first saw Maurice Guthrie, her heart was filled with a vague unrest. He seemed so entirely the embodiment of her ideal hero—so handsome, so elegant in appearance, and so courteous in manner, that her poor, foolish heart throbbed with a wild, restless pain whenever she thought of him. Still she had hardly

even hoped to see him again, and when he had passed while she talked with Frank at the gate, her heart had thrilled wildly in response to the admiring glances which he cast upon her as he courteously raised his hat. Then tears of vexation sprang to her eyes, that he had seen her talking with her rustic lover.

Frank's presence suddenly grew intolerable to her, and her fingers nervously plucked to pieces the cinnamon rose which she held in her hand; then casting the scarlet petals petulantly from her, she turned without a word and went into the house, leaving him to wonder at her strange behavior.

As for Maurice Guthrie, the scene he had just witnessed made him still more determined to win the girl's love. A feeling closely allied to that possessed by the proverbial "dog in the manger" caused him to vow to depose the country lover.

The next afternoon Mr. Guthrie called at the cottage, his ready tongue making plausible excuses for his coming. He came again, and again, until it was evident that he was so gladly welcomed he needed no excuse for seeking her company.

If Mamie had but known half the evil of his nature, she would have shrank from his presence; but he was too polished a scoundrel not to veil the workings of his corrupt heart from her innocent eyes; so she, poor child, believed him to be the

gentleman he appeared, and thought all his false, loving words had the ring of the true metal in them.

All too fleetly, to her, the happy days fled by, and her lover—his vacation ended, bade her goodbye with many protestations of affection, and vows to return and claim the treasure that he had found. Then he walked back to Dr. Evert's, with a sardonic smile upon his face.

What to him were her aching heart and tearstained face? Nothing but incense at the shrine of his vanity.

CHAPTER XXII.

"SHE LOVED YOU BETTER THAN YOU KNEW."

"A smile or kiss as he shall use the art Shall have the cunning skill to break a heart."

About the time that their visitor returned to Chicago, Flossie left for school. It was a great trial to the poor child to leave home; especially as Edna would not accompany her this season. But Flossie did not feel the separation more deeply than those she left behind; for she was inexpressibly dear to them all, and they sadly missed her bright face and winsome ways. Fall quickly merged into winter, and Evert Place seemed cold and still, in contrast to the brightness and bloom of the previous summer, when it had been filled with happy faces and gay voices. The brightest gleams of joy were now cast by the arrival of letters from Earl and Flossie.

In January came the wedding cards of Maurice Guthrie and Beulah, accompanied by a warm invitation to Mrs. Evert and Edna, to come a couple of weeks previous to the time set for the wedding, and make them a visit.

They decided to comply with the request, and the day before their departure Dr. Evert said to Edna,— "I was at Mr. Howard's to-day; his daughter is slowly dying of consumption, and her father's grief and despair is something pitiful to witness. She begged me to request you to call upon her before you go away. I am going now to visit a patient who lives beyond there, and if you will go this afternoon, I will take you in the sleigh that far, and call for you upon my return home."

Edna readily consented, and was soon set down at the door of the cottage.

In answer to her rap for admittance, a servant opened the door, and showed her into the room where the sick girl reclined in an invalid's chair. She was not yet confined to her bed, though too weak to leave the room. Still she was ever alert, taxing her feeble strength to the utmost, to cheer her old father, whose heart was slowly breaking, as he watched his fading blossom.

Edna was startled at the appalling change in Mamie's lovely face. It was wan and thin; her large dark eyes were sunken, and on her cheeks burned the hectic flush of the consumptive.

After conversing awhile, Mamie fixed her large, mournful dark eyes upon Edna, saying:

"I heard that you are going to attend the wedding of Mr. Guthrie and Miss Whitney. I very much desire to send a small package to him; would you do me the favor to take it to him? I presume I might send it by mail, but I wrote to

him once and received no answer, and I am not sure that I have the correct address.

Edna consented to bear the parcel, then sat and looked sorrowfully at the poor girl, who feebly arose, and going to her escritoir, unlocked a drawer and took from it a small parcel. With trembling fingers she laid it in Edna's hands, saying:

"You will see him, and I—oh God! I would give every hour that yet remains of my brief life, to see him, and hear him speak to me in loving tones; but that can never be. I am dying, and he will soon be far sway, and no word of sympathy will ever come to soothe my pathway to the grave. You will keep my secret, will you not? I am not ashamed of loving him, but I would not have others know he was false to me."

Tears sprang into Edna's eyes as she looked into those large, dark orbs, so full of unutterable sadness; then hearing Dr. Evert's voice calling her, she bent over the chair of the sufferer and pressed a tearful kiss upon the girl's white brow.

Mamie saw the tears and quoted:

"'The sunbeam of an hour,
Which gave life's hidden treasures to mine eye,
As they lay shining in their secret founts,
Went out and left them colorless. 'Tis past—
And what remains on earth? The rainbow mist
Through which I gazed, hath melted, and my sight
Is cleared to look on all things as they are!
But this is far too mournful! Life's dark gift
Hath fallen too early and too cold upon me!
Therefore I would go hence!'"

A few days later Mrs. Evert and Edna made the trip to Chicago without incident, and were welcomed with delight to the magnificent home of their friends.

Edna's loving eyes noted in Earl's face a gay, reckless look which she had never seen there before; otherwise he was unchanged, and his joy at meeting her again was too evident to be doubted.

Shortly after their arrival Mr. Guthrie called, and many others dropped in during the evening, and the spacious rooms were gay with light laughter and merry repartee.

Seeing Mr. Guthrie standing a little apart from the others, Edna went to him and said: "I wish to speak with you alone a few minutes."

He courteously offered her his arm to escort her across the long drawing-rooms to the conservatory beyond. She disdainfully refused it, but walked silently and proudly at his side, until they had gone half the length of the conservatory, then turning, she faced him, saying:

"I am the bearer of a parcel to you from Mamie Howard. She sent it by me because she feared she did not have your correct address, as she had received no answer to the letter she wrote you."

There was no mistaking the scornful gleam in Edna's blue eyes, and Guthrie's face flushed angrily as he accepted the parcel from her hands.

"I believe that all country girls are fools!" he said, insolently. "They seem to think if a fellow

passes a few hours in their company, and speaks a few compliments, he must needs desire to marry them."

Edna disdainfully replied: "It is too true that many of them cannot detect the base metal, but are willing to accept it for the true coin; and are ready to believe a man is a gentleman because he has the manners and dress of one. They innocently think that the trusting love of a pure young heart, must needs be a sacred thing in the eyes of him who called it forth; but, alas! it is not true, as poor Mamie Howard, who lies there dying, has found to her sorrow. But for him who has so recklessly sown thorns in her pathway, let him look to it, that he does not get the full measure of sorrow meted out to him."

Mr. Guthrie turned away from her, saying, with an ironical bow: "Miss Carlisle, I acknowledge your histrionic talent to be great, but I wearied of theatrics long ago. Therefore I beg you will pardon me if I leave you to try your powers on some one else."

His bearing was haughty and sarcastic, but there was a vague unrest in his heart, and he returned home very early, and retiring to his room, undid the parcel Mamie had sent. It contained a bracelet which he had given her the previous summer. The gold band was set with opals, and the jewels gleamed wickedly in the gaslight.

How well he remembered the delight mirrored in

her dark eyes when he had clasped it around her white arm. How beautiful she had looked! and Edna had said she was dying! A dull pain tugged at his heart while he opened and read a letter which had been enclosed in the package. It ran as follows:

"MR. GUTHRIE:—I herewith return the bracelet you gave me. Accept my best wishes for your future joy. While I live my most earnest desire will be for your happiness, though my peace and contentment of mind were valueless in your sight. I was a common wild flower growing by the highway of your prosperity, and you stepped aside for a moment to crush the homely blossom. But I will not upbraid you, for you filled my heart with joy for a little season, although I doubt not I have dearly paid for that bliss, in the hopeless agony that has wrung my heart while I watched for the return of the beloved form that never came. Oh! how wearily time has passed! Days seem to have merged into weeks, weeks into months, and months into years, while I sorrowed for that gift of Heaven, which lent one moment of existence light, that dimmed the rest forever.

[&]quot;' And I have dreamed through all these years
Of patient hope, and faith, and tears,
That Love's strong hand would put aside
The barriers of place and pride;
Would reach the pathless darkness through,
And draw me softly up to you.

But that is past. If you should stray
Beside my grave some future day,
Perhaps the violets o'er my dust,
May half betray their buried trust,
And say—their blue eyes full of dew—
She loved you better than you knew.'

"M. H."

CHAPTER XXIII.

"YOUTH ON THE PROW AND PLEASURE AT THE HELM."

"Woman's lot is on you—silent tears to weep,
And patient smiles to wear through suffering's hour,
And sumless riches, from affection's deep,
To pour on broken reeds—a wasted shower!
And to make idols, and to find them clay;
And to bewail that worship. Therefore pray!"

The first week of Edna's visit to Chicago passed swiftly by, and, surrounded upon every side by love and admiration, what wonder if she was happy and opened her heart to joy, as a dewy rose bud unfolds its petals to receive the sunbeams. Her debut into the select circle in which the Whitneys moved, was, from a social point of view, a great success. She had already made for herself a reputation among people of literary taste, and when her admirers saw that she was young and beautiful, they burned before her the incense of honest adoration. She was dismayed. It was not for this that she had communed with God and nature, until she caught rays of Heaven's own brightness, to retain with a poet's pen; but her friends were delighted that she excited so much admiration, and Earl loved her none the less that others found her so lovable. His pure and tender love for his betrothed was one fair, redeeming feature in a character not altogether stainless.

He had loved her long and truly, and his love bore no more taint of earth, than pure white lilies reflect the murkiness of the pool below them. And as he stood beside her one morning, listening to her sweet, low voice, which to him was purest music, happiness smiled in his eyes, and love and youth rested like a crown of glory upon his brow.

"May I interrupt your 'converse sweet?'" said a gay, musical voice, and looking around they be-

held Beulah standing in the doorway.

She was looking very lovely, her complexion was 'lilies and roses,' and the garnet dress which she wore contrasted beautifully with her golden hair, which was coiled upon her head in a shining, fluffy mass, that might well have represented woven sunbeams.

Her wondrous grey eyes were lighted up with pleasure, and her jeweled fingers clasped an invitation card, as she said, "Invitations to a party at Mrs. Sherwood's. Will you go, Edna? Of course it is quite out of the question that the rest of us should refuse."

Earl smilingly said, "I think it quite out of the question that Edna should refuse, after such a triumph as she enjoyed at the party which we went to the other evening."

Beulah answered, laughing scornfully, "I do not think you used the word enjoyed advisedly."

To my mind, Edna did not appear to enjoy the adulation which she received, at all; though I confess so much flattery would have quite turned my head when I made my debut into the fashionable world; I am not sure it did not get a little bit awry, as it was. Shall you go, Edna?"

Edna was smiling very gravely now, as she replied, "That depends—is it to be a conversazione?"

"Principally; but judging by my past experience at Mrs. Sherwood's parties, I should say that nothing will be omitted that would make the evening pass pleasantly to guests of different tastes. It will be something similar to the one we attended the other evening, only it will be on a grander scale. Mrs. Sherwood always excels."

"Wine, and cards, and dancing," said Edna, as she walked to the window and looked out into the street. "No, I cannot go."

The brother and sister looked at each other in surprise, then Beulah said, lightly:

"O you little Puritan! has your tender conscience been annoying you about attending that party?"

"No," said Edna, gravely, "I went in ignorance of the nature of the party to which I had accepted an invitation."

"O pshaw! Edna," Beulah exclaimed, contemptuously. "Do cast aside those whimsical fancies, and go in for a winter's enjoyment. I know that with a little instruction you could dance like a fairy. Earl waltzes divinely, and could teach you equal to a dancing master."

Then seeing Edna's lip curl scornfully, Beulah continued: "You are too young and pretty, my dear, to be so puritanical. Enjoy yourself now, and by and by, when you get old, if you will be religious, it won't seem so incongruous. Religion corresponds very nicely with white hairs, but for one of your age—pshaw! it is simply ridiculous."

Earl looked up apprehensively. He knew Edna's disposition well enough to be certain that his sister had not chosen an argument likely to influence her.

Edna faced Beulah now; her cheeks were very pale, for her heart was stirred to its deepest depths. "What is it you would have me do?" she said, "desert the standard of my Lord, and spend all my youth and strength—that might be used in winning souls for Him—spend my days and nights in a dissipation that gives no real pleasure, and is naught but vanity and vexation of spirit; and then when I become old, shall I cast myself at my Savior's feet and cry, 'Here, Lord, I give myself away, 'tis all that I can do?'"

There was a touch of irony in her tones as she repeated the last words. Then she added:

"I do not believe the manner of life you wish me to adopt gives the most happiness in time, certainly not in eternity. But even if I believed the present enjoyment to be greater, I would still faithfully use the talents my God has given me, and strive to keep myself 'unspotted from the world.'"

Earl was touched by the pathos of her voice, and he said:

"You shall be annoyed no more about this party, or about going any place which you would prefer staying away from; but I hope you will honor me with your company to the opera this evening? I particularly desire you to go, as I wish to present some of my friends to you."

There was a sorrowful, pleading expression in her violet eyes, as she raised them to his, saying: "O, Earl, I am so sorry to disappoint you, but this is prayer-meeting night, and I could not miss that. Some other evening I will go with you."

"Good heavens! Edna," exclaimed Beulah, deeply exasperated. "What possible enjoyment can you find in going to prayer-meeting? Or perhaps you go as a penance for your many sins."

Edna replied: "I go because I regard it as a duty, and because it is a source of spiritual strength to me. But you can no more understand the pleasure which a Christian derives from these meetings, than he who stands on the outside of a building which contains a beautifully painted window, can see the beauty which is only visible from within."

"Well," sighed Beulah, "I am sure I don't know

how you and Earl will manage when you are married; evidently you belong to different worlds."

Earl looked at Edna with a smile.

"When that happy time comes," he said, "we will each give up our own wishes and inclinations, and choose some happy medium, will we not, my darling?"

Edna sadly regarded him for a moment, and tears stole into her eyes, and her voice was tremulous with emotion, as she replied:

"Not even to please you, Earl, can I depart from my convictions of right, and my loyalty to God. O, I know now why our Heavenly Father, in infinite solicitude for his children, has bidden them, 'Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.' It was because he knew that if they were their hearts would be pierced through with many sorrows."

Other members of the family now came into the room, and the subject was dropped.

Late that afternoon, as Earl was leaving the bank to return home, he was accosted by a familiar voice, and turned to find himself face to face with Bertie Ross, a friend who had been absent from the city for some time.

After conversing for a few minutes, Ross said:

"They tell me that you are engaged, and I have been hearing marvelous stories of the grace and beauty of your betrothed, and I am longing to be introduced to her; shall you bring her to the opera to-night?"

"Yes, I think so," Earl replied.

He was so anxious to have Edna go, that he could not believe that she would refuse to do so when she saw how much he really desired it.

Bidding a gay adieu to his friend, Earl went to a florist's, and purchased for Edna a bouquet of rare flowers, and carried it home with a happy smile resting upon his face.

He told himself that his friends should see how well he had chosen. He could well imagine the admiration that would be bestowed upon his beloved. And yet it was not for her beauty of face or form that he loved her; he had seen women as beautiful, possibly more beautiful, than Edna; and yet for them he had no other feeling than admiration.

Like Flossie, Earl was a passionate admirer of the beautiful in all its forms, from a flower to a woman; but Edna possessed something greater than personal beauty; genius glorified her maiden brow, and goodness and love dwelt peacefully in her heart; and she wore her pure, white robe of spotless innocence, like a creature of light, apparently unconscious that others were not attired in like garments of lilied whiteness.

"Ah, well," he thought, "she is fair, and sweet, and saintly, and I am all unworthy of her; but I will always be kind and true to her." Then re-

membering how her violet eyes always lighted up with love for him, he buried his handsome face in the fragrant bouquet in an ecstasy of happiness.

Poor fellow! he was very much in love, and all unconscious of the disappointment in store for him.

When he arrived at home he missed his betrothed's welcoming smile, and seeing a servant maid passing through the hall, he said:

"Tell Miss Carlisle that I desire a few minutes conversation with her in the library."

"She has gone out, sir," said the girl. "You will find a note from her lying on your table."

Earl wonderingly bounded up the stair, and entering his room, found the dainty missive awaiting him. Breaking the seal, he read:

"Dear Earl:—Mrs. Russell (nee Atwood) called this morning and insisted that Aunt Nellie and I should dine with her this evening. She is to entertain, among other visitors, an old minister (a standard bearer in the church,) whom we have long desired to meet. We shall go from Mrs. Russell's to prayer-meeting. Will you not meet us there, my Earl, and accompany us home?

"Ever yours,

"EDNA."

Earl was in a rage of vexation and disappoint-

ment; he tore Edna's note and cast it angrily from him.

He was angry, not only that she had refused to accompany him to the opera, but she had committed a second offence in seeking to draw him to prayer-meeting.

Prayer-meeting, indeed! he had never attended one in his life, and never expected to do so.

He was accustomed to having his own way, and this first conflict of wishes between himself and his betrothed, vexed him sorely.

He was so anxious to present her to his friends, and if she would go nowhere except to church, how were they to meet her?

He crushed her flowers beneath his heel with an angry ejaculation. Then he looked down upon the poor, crushed blossoms, breathing out their last fragrant breath upon the air, and his face softened. Perhaps it was because flowers were so closely associated in his mind with Edna. They were usually her only ornament, and when he once spoke to her of this peculiarity, she replied that she preferred them, "because, unlike gold and jewels, the hand of man could not brighten and polish them, and make them more beautiful than when they left the hand of the Creator."

Earl picked up the crushed blossoms; somehow looking at them caused his anger toward Edna to melt away.

Her offence had not been so grievous after all, he

thought. She had only complied with her friend's urgent request, seconded, doubtless, by Mrs. Evert, and had but followed the convictions of her own pure heart, when she asked him to come to prayer-meeting; and was it not her loyalty to her convictions of right which had made her character so lovable in his eyes? Besides there would be many other evenings when she could go with him; she had promised she would. Why should he be so foolishly impatient?

He picked up the torn note, and piecing it together, re-read:

"Will you not meet us there, my Earl?"

What a tender, loving appeal, he thought. Yes, he would go. He could imagine how the delicate color would flush her cheeks, and her eyes brighten when she should see him there.

"Dear, sweet soul!" he murmured. "Oh, I pray Heaven to bless my darling. Whatever comes to me, Heaven bless my darling!"

A few hours later as he was descending the steps, ready to enter the carriage to drive to the church, he met Maurice Guthrie.

"Well I am just in time," said Mr. Guthrie. "I

see you are going out."

"Yes," said Earl, constrainedly, "I have an engagement."

"Anything important, Whitney? I am very anxious you should go to the club this evening. Where were you going?"

"My aunt and Miss Carlisle have gone to prayer-meeting, and wished me to escort them home," Earl explained, confusedly.

Mr. Guthrie folded his arms and laughed derisively. "Haven't elected you for deacon yet, have they?" he inquired.

"Come, Whitney, that is all nonsense. Better begin as you expect to hold out. You can send the carriage for them, and it will be just as well as if you had gone there yourself; and in the meantime you can spend a jolly evening with the boys. They have been inquiring about you a good deal lately; and I made the best excuses for you that I could, for—hang it all, I won't go back on a friend; but I wouldn't advise you to stay away much longer, for they would run you high if they found out you had been attending prayer-meeting."

Earl stood irresolute a few moments; good and evil were contending in his heart. He well knew that the scene of gayety which he was solicited to join was one from which his betrothed's pure nature would shrink with repulsion; but he had too long indulged in a downward course to be able to readily resist temptation now; especially with that seductive voice in his ear, and more than all he feared the derisive laughter of his friends; so he gave the coachman directions to fetch Mrs. Evert and Miss Carlisle home from church; and

then, turning, locked arms with his so-called friend, and let him lead him whither he would.

But we must now return to Edna. She and Mrs. Evert had spent a very pleasant afternoon with their old friend. Esther Russell possessed a very beautiful home, and was evidently a happy wife and mother. She had two children, Clara, the eldest, five years old, and a boy two years younger, who bore a striking resemblance to his uncle Homer, for whom he had been named.

His face wore the same beautiful expression, his hair rippled away from a broad white brow, and his great laughing brown eyes looked "peace and good will" to all the world.

Esther had changed little since they saw her last. She was of that happy temperament over which time has little power; the passing years might steal some of the roundness and bloom from her cheeks, and change her golden brown hair to silver; but she would always be lovely, because her face was but the index of a happy spirit, upon whom the Master has pronounced blessing, because their pure hearts enable them to "see God."

The hours spent in Esther's happy home were very pleasant to Edna, for there she met with those who look beyond the things of time and sense; but when Earl failed to meet them as she had requested, her heart sank heavily with dread of an unhappy future.

Would it always be so? she wondered. He to travel one path, and she another; bound together by love's strong bond, yet separated in the most important things of life.

When they returned home from prayer-meeting, they found many callers gathered there, whom Mrs. Whitney and her daughters were entertaining with admirable grace and cleverness.

Mrs. Evert joined them, but Edna felt too sad and dispirited to meet company, so she stole quietly into the library, and selecting a book, sought oblivion from the sad thoughts harassing her.

She sat there reading for perhaps two hours, her mind being drawn off on the wings of fancy by a gifted writer. She heard the last caller depart; heard Beulah and Ivy gaily ascending to their rooms. Mrs. Whitney and Mrs. Evert were evidently having a quiet chat in the deserted drawing-room, for Edna could hear their low voices and soft laughter.

Heart and brain alike weary, she at last laid down her book to retire to her room, wondering if it were possible for her to sleep with her mind so sadly oppressed.

Just as she was crossing the wide hall to ascend the stair, she heard the grating of a night key in the door, and in another moment Earl stepped into the hall.

He was vainly trying to steady his reeling

steps, and started visibly at seeing Edna there. He had expected to pass to his room unobserved and sleep off the effect of his revelry before he met her pure eyes.

Too well she understood his condition; the experiences of her early years had indelibly impressed upon her memory the look of the inebriate.

A low, wailing cry broke from her lips, and she grew pale and faint, and clung feebly to the balustrade. Earl staggered guiltily up the stairway, his mind filled with but one thought, one desire, to escape to his room as soon as possible. When half way up the stair he missed his footing, and would have fallen had he not clung desperately to the balustrade.

Mrs. Evert came into the hall a moment later, and found Edna standing there with pallid face, trembling violently from head to foot.

Mrs. Evert was greatly alarmed and drew the young girl to her bosom with endearing words and eager questionings, to which she could obtain no reply; but there was a world of agony in Edna's violet eyes as she sobbed, "Oh, aunt Nellie, take me home! My heart is broken!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

"TO SUFFER AND BE STRONG."

"Oh, fear not in a world like this,
And thou shalt know ere long,—
Know how sublime a thing it is,
To suffer and be strong."

Edna did not lay her head upon the pillow that night. The greatest sorrow of her life had come upon her, and all through the long, weary hours, she sat by the window and gazed out into the pale moonlight, wringing her white hands, and moaning piteously.

She dimly wondered why she had not died before this came to pass? Had she not already suffered enough through the evil of intemperance without seeing her true, noble Earl become its victim?

"Oh, God! Oh, God!" she wailed under her breath, raising her tearless, agonized face Heavenward. "Oh, God, is there no help! Must the brightest and best of our land go down beneath this curse, while we who would freely give our heart's blood to save them, stand by and see the havoc wrought? My brother's blood has long cried out to me, and now, oh, God! woe is heaped upon woe!"

The next morning she wandered into the conservatory, herself as pale and calm as the calla lily. Earl found her there when he came down at a late hour.

He was feeling harassed and fretful, but tried to appear calm and natural, as he passed the greetings of the morning, and began to apologize for not complying with the request contained in her note.

He shrank, however, from the gaze of her great, troubled eyes, for they seemed to be reading his very soul, while he begged her forgiveness; adding that it had been quite impossible for him to do as she had requested.

"I could forgive you much," she sadly replied; "but, oh, what I have suffered since you came home last night; you almost broke my heart, Earl."

He had believed until then that she had not been aware of his condition.

"I suppose you mean to imply that I was drunk," he angrily exclaimed. More angrily than he was aware, for he was taken by surprise, and was also feeling nervous and fretful as a result of last night's revelry. "But if your suppositions were true," he added, "it is not such a terrible crime. You might easily overlook that; other women do."

Edna sorrowfully replied—

"I do not boast of the measure of my love for you; but this I know; that joy or sorrow, life or death, are of small moment to me when compared with your welfare. But, dearly as I love you, Earl, I can never marry a drunkard."

Earl was stung to the quick by her words. "Then give me back my ring," he cried, on the impulse of the moment. "Since I am so contemptible in your eyes, return my ring." With trembling fingers she took off the ring and laid it in his hand, her face full of agonized entreaty.

He cast the ring on the floor, and ground it beneath his heel until the jewels were a mass of glittering dust.

"Fair and frail as woman's love," he said bitterly. "Very pretty to admire and talk about, but of no endurance."

The pain Edna endured during that scene no pen can describe. To her it seemed the death of love and hope, crushed beneath the vindictive heel of him she had loved dearer than aught else on earth. She sank upon a seat; the agonized wail breaking unconsciously from her lips,—"My God! my God! why hast Thou forsaken me?"

That cry recalled Earl's better nature, and he was filled with shame and contrition.

"Forgive me, Edna," he pleaded. "Forgive me, my love, though I can never forgive myself. All the days of my life I shall regret this unmanly act."

"I forgive you, Earl," she said, gazing at him with great, troubled eyes. "But oh! it had been kinder to me if you had stabbed me to the heart."

He gathered her to his breast with protestations of love and sorrow, but she shrank from his embrace; her heart was bleeding too painfully from the wound which he had just inflicted, for her to accept his caresses.

"I shall purchase another ring to-day," he said, "to replace the one which I destroyed."

"No," she replied in low, troubled tones, "that is the last betrothal ring I shall ever wear."

Earl's heart was filled with grief and dismay; his voice was husky with emotion as he said—

"Forgive me, Edna. I am so overcome with shame I hardly dare raise my eyes to your pure face. Believe me, there is nothing I would not do were it possible to recall by act of mine, that which I did last night and to-day. But God requite me according to my deed if I ever become intoxicated again. I mean to become more worthy of your love; it is only a short time until our marriage takes place; and I am sure that with the shield of your constant companionship, I can resist temptation."

Edna wearily replied, "Our marriage must be indefinitely postponed. We can never marry until you prove that you have overcome the influence of—of—" She fell forward pale and breathless; for the first time in her life Edna had fainted.

Earl was frantic with fright and grief; his summons speedily brought the terrified women of the household upon the scene, and a messenger was

dispatched for a physician. Before he arrived, however, Edna had become conscious and been borne to her room.

The doctor prescribed opiates and quiet, saying that a little rest was all she needed, as she appeared to be suffering from intense mental excitement.

The narcotic which he administered soon took effect, and she slept heavily for hours. Meanwhile Mrs. Evert lingered near with motherly anxiety.

Earl never left the house that day, but restlessly paced his suite of rooms, or stole noiselessly to her door, and listened with eager, haggard face to learn if she was still sleeping.

In the dusk of the evening she awoke, and the old dull heartache again assailed her. All the trouble she had ever known had come to her through the rum power, and she shrank from it with a dread and despair, that one who had never had her sad experience could not know. It seemed to her that dark clouds of sorrow were again hovering about her, shutting out light and hope.

Mrs. Evert, who was sitting beside the bed, saw the dumb agony in the young girl's eyes; observed the convulsive clasping of her hands, and leaning over her said softly, in accents of pitying tenderness, "My child." That was all she said, but to the poor girl to whom she had indeed been as a mother, the words spoke volumes, and Edna laid her aching head upon the kind, motherly heart with a voiceless sob.

Presently she inquired in a faltering voice,—

"Where is Earl?"

"In the corridor, I think," Mrs. Evert replied.

"He is anxiously waiting to learn if you are feeling better."

Edna raised her head with an eager, anxious light in her eyes.

"Please tell him that I am better; he must suffer no anxiety on my account. Say that I have been very much refreshed by my long sleep."

When Mrs. Evert went to deliver the message, she felt strongly inclined to reproach the young man; but the sad expression of his face disarmed her of her resentment, and she only said,—"Edna has not told me the cause of her trouble, but I strongly surmise that some action of yours has grieved her;" then laying her hand upon his arm in an appealing way, she added with a faltering of tears in her voice—

"Earl, she is inexpressibly dear to me, almost as dear as my own Flossie, and I hope you will try to prove worthy of my lily flower."

Earl was silent for a moment; then he said, "Worthy of her I cannot be; but I will try to live a purer, better life."

The whole family had been greatly alarmed and annoyed by Edna's sudden illness. Mrs. Whitney had invited a number of friends to dine with them

that evening; and as she had decided to give the dinner mainly because she desired to make her friends acquainted with her son's betrothed—of whose beauty and talents she was quite proud—naturally she felt deeply disappointed at Edna's unaccountable illness.

Learning that she was awake, Mrs. Whitney came into the room with eager inquiries as to whether it were possible for Edna to meet their guests without taxing her strength unduly.

She replied that she was still very weak, but would try to appear, since her friends so much desired it.

It was late before she was able to descend to the drawing-room; the guests had all arrived, and the hum of merry voices filled the spacious rooms. Earl moved among the assembled guests with genial, high-bred courtesy, and with graceful attentions made each one feel welcome; yet he was ever eagerly listening for Edna's coming. His attentive ear caught the sound of her light step on the stair, and he met her at the door, and escorted her to a seat.

She was looking very lovely this evening, despite the unusual pallor of her cheeks. In striking contrast to the other ladies, who were dressed in light evening dresses with bare arms and shoulders, she wore a close-fitting black velvet, her only ornament being a cluster of blush roses.

Many persons came forward and were presented

to her, and all wondered at the pallor of the beautiful, weary face.

She was instinctively drawn to Mr. Ross; his face, though not handsome, was a face to be trusted; a face that a woman or child in need of help would instinctively choose from among a crowd to make their appeal to. He was Edna's escort to dinner, and though charmed with his fair companion, he wondered at her silence and pale cheeks.

When the wine went round, Earl's cheek flushed with eager desire for the ruby liquor, but glancing across the table to where Edna sat, he observed her troubled blue eyes resting wistfully upon him, and he quietly refused the wine.

Edna turned to speak to Mr. Ross, who noted that a dainty pink color had crept into her cheeks, and wondered at the change.

"You do not drink wine?" she said to him as she noticed that he had turned down his glasses.

"No, Miss Carlisle," he replied, "I never do. I had a Christian mother once. Alas! she died when I was but sixteen; but I strive always to live as she would wish, were she alive. Her last words to me were, 'Bertie, keep your hands and heart clean, and your life pure, that you may be permitted to enter the Heavenly City, whither I precede you.'

"I have met with much temptation, Miss Carlisle,

but my mother's parting admonition has lived in my memory, and has always been a shield to me; and I live in the hope of meeting my sainted mother in the life beyond, having, by God's grace, 'kept my hands and heart clean, and my life pure.'"

Edna looked at him with shining eyes. "I pray God you may," she said fervently. "Well would it be for the rest of the world, if they so nobly kept the vows they make to those that love them."

The evening passed brightly and swiftly to happy hearts; but Edna was still feeling ill and faint; dark waters of sorrow seemed to encompass her, and heart-sick and weary, her mind tossed help-lessly among the dark waves, longing for peace and rest.

Noting the increasing pallor of her cheeks, and that the brooding shadow was deepening in her eyes, Earl conducted her to a curtained alcove, where she might, in a measure, enjoy seclusion; and if she willed, could observe the happy groups in the brilliantly lighted room, and she herself remain in shadow:

Handsome and debonair he stood beside her, observing all that passed within the room, yet speaking with her in soft, low tones, which made his commonest sentences seem instinct with love.

By and by Mr. Guthrie drew near and joined in the conversation. Earl was presently called away for a moment, and Mr. Guthrie turned to Edna, saying, in low, mocking tones—

"Miss Carlisle, allow me to congratulate you on your truly wonderful success as a missionary in Chicago. Earl informed me last evening that he was going to prayer-meeting. I suppose you were delighted to see him there? Considering the wonderful influence you exert, I almost fear to converse with you, lest I should be constrained to cry out, 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian!'"

She looked earnestly at him as she replied—
"You might at least have saved yourself that implication. Christianity, powerful as it is, seldom finds a lodgement in a breast from whence honor has flown."

His eyes flashed angrily, but he replied lightly—
"I see that on account of my inability to return
the love of your little country friend, you are
determined to believe all manner of evil against
me. I once read a verse which so plainly expresses my sentiments with regard to love, that
you must pardon me if I repeat it to you. The
sentiment it voices must be my excuse for so lightly valuing the love which was so easily won:

'"There is nothing held so dear
As love, if only it be hard to win.
The roses that in yonder hedge appear
Outdo our garden-buds which bloom within;
But since the hand may pluck them every day,
Unmarked they bud, bloom, drop and drift away."

Then he added mockingly—"I shall yet win your esteem, Miss Carlisle. I am to be married soon, you know, and you will be surprised to see that I will settle down and lead an irreproachable life."

"I would indeed be surprised if that were the case," she replied bitterly; "for no one ever yet scattered abroad the night-shade of sin and self-ishness in youth, and in maturity reaped the white flower of stainless purity."

Earl returned to them just then, and Mr. Guthrie turned to him saying,—

"Miss Carlisle has been reading me a long homily upon morality. Indeed she seems to have a contempt for all who do not pattern after her paragon of excellence, Mr. Atwood. He is the standard by which she measures us all."

Edna's cheeks flushed and her eyes gleamed darkly, but her manner was perfectly calm, as she replied—

"I measure good and evil only by the Divine standard, but Mr. Atwood's character is indeed irreproachable, and"—

"And, moreover," Guthrie interposed, "he is a most patient lover. Perhaps he has learned that when a man has the sympathy and admiration of the object of his affections, he may hope to win against many odds." So saying, Guthrie turned and left them, hoping that the shaft had gone home and would rankle deeply.

Earl looked at Edna in surprise.

"What does Maurice mean?" he inquired. "Is Homer Atwood your lover, Edna?"

She replied: "He is my friend, and I owe him much. All that I have and am, came to me through his friendship for my brother, when we were lowly and in grief."

"Then he is not my rival?" Earl questioned. His heart was stirred to jealousy by Guthrie's word's, and memory brought forward a troop of apparently convincing proofs in favor of the supposition which had never claimed his attention before.

"You have no rival in my affections," she said, softly. "It rests entirely with you whether you will retain my love or not."

"Edna, you will not postpone our marriage? Say that it may take place at the appointed time. You cannot realize how I tremble at the thought that if our marriage is postponed I may eventually lose you."

Her voice trembled, and she was white to the lips, as she replied:

"Earl, if you love me do not urge this matter further; cannot you see I am suffering? My childhood was one of continued sorrow, and yet I have suffered more in the last twenty-four hours than I endured in all those years of darkness and gloom."

CHAPTER XXV.

"YOU WILL WAKE, AND REMEMBER, AND UNDER-STAND."

"You may break, you may shatter the vase if you will, But the scent of the rose will cling round it still."

Two weeks later, Beulah and Maurice Guthrie were married, and departed for Europe, expecting to spend the remainder of the winter in Italy. Dr. Evert had come to Chicago to witness the marriage of his niece, and Mrs. Evert and Edna returned home with him the following day.

The day after their arrival home, Edna went over to see Mamie Howard.

The doctor had said that Mamie was failing very fast, but Edna had not realized that so great a change could be wrought in so short a time, until she was ushered into the room where the sick girl lay.

Mamie held out a thin, white hand, and a wintry smile flitted across her wasted features. Then she glanced apprehensively toward her father, who sat in a distant corner, his bowed head and sorrowful aspect betokening his inward grief. Speaking in a low whisper, she said:

"You saw him? Mr. Guthrie, I mean. What did he say when you gave him the parcel I sent?"

"He did not say much," Edna replied, evasively, but I think his feelings were touched a little."

A shade of sadness stole across Mamie's face. "Perhaps I ought not to have written," she said, 'but I could not keep his gift when he was to be married so soon, and the temptation to write him a few words was yery strong, for I realized that I should never see him again. He may come here visiting sometime with his gay young bride, but I shall be cold and quiet then, and could not hear his tread if he should care to come and stand beside my grave."

Gazing wistfully into Edna's face, Mamie inquired: "Did he send no message to me?"

Edna struggled to keep back the tears of sympathy that welled to her eyes, as she replied in the negative.

Mamie was evidently disappointed; she clasped her hands convulsively, and great tears crept through her closed lids and trickled down her thin, white cheeks.

After awhile she controlled her emotion, and her large, mournful dark eyes read Edna's face, as she inquired:

"Did he seem happy? Will she make him

happy, do you think ?"

Edna longed to reply that he was likely to be far happier than he deserved, but she feared to wound the sensitive nature of the sick girl.

At that moment the jingle of sleigh bells was

heard, and looking out, Edna saw that the occupants of the sleigh were Mrs. Atwood and Homer.

They alighted at the gate, and as they came slowly up the walk, they unconsciously formed a pleasing picture. The sunset of life was shedding a mellow glow over Mrs. Atwood's waning beauty, as she leaned lovingly and gracefully on the arm of her strong, young son.

Homer was evidently delighted to meet Edna, for his cheeks flushed, and his hand trembled, when he held hers in greeting.

His loving eyes instantly noticed a changed expression in her face—the look of a noble soul who bravely bears the burden of another's sin.

What was the cause? he wondered.

His eyes sought her finger whereon her betrothal ring had rested. It was gone!

A look of keen surprise, that instantly was veiled, passed over his face; but Edna caught the fleeting glance, and the rose-bloom covered her fair face, then their eyes met for one lingering moment. How wonderful is the language of the eye—that communion of souls when lips are silent. The rebel rose-hue more deeply dyed Edna's cheeks, and Homer's eyes beamed with their old-time luster.

Many times thereafter Edna met Mrs. Atwood at the bed-side of the sick girl, and she grew to love, with deep affection, the saintly, white-haired woman who seemed to live so fully in the light of the other world.

Edna finally spent all her time at the cottage. Mamie clung to her with intense fondness, and with tears in his eyes, Mr. Howard begged Edna to stay with his fading blossom until the end came.

"It is breaking my heart," he said, shaking his grey head, pathetically. "But why do I weep to part from her? She will not long have reached the Promised Land, until I too cast my pilgrim staff away, and rest beside her beneath the boughs of the Tree of Life."

Mamie lingered on for several weeks; her cough was not painful, it seemed rather the gradual wasting away of one who has not the will to live.

Weaker and whiter yet she grew, and one day at the last, when Dr. Evert called to prescribe for her, she roused herself, and inquired how long she was likely to live.

He regarded her sadly a moment, not liking to answer.

Seeing him hesitate, she said:

"Fear not to answer, for I tell you it is with glad calmness I behold the veil falling between me and the world wherein my heart so ill hath rested."

Dr. Evert replied huskily: "The end will come in a few days at most, possibly in a few hours."

Her father was standing by the bed-side, his tall form shaking with emotion.

She put out her hand to him, feebly repeating, in a sweet, weak voice:

"'Be thou glad—I say rejoice above your favored child, who, when her life had changed its glittering robes for the dull garb of sorrow, which doth cling so heavily around the journeyers on—cast down its weight and—slept."

All evening her father sat by her pillow, his face hidden in his toil-worn hands, and his form convulsed with sobs; and she regarded him sorrowfully, large tears filling her mournful dark eyes, while ever and anon she lifted her weak, white hands, and ran her fingers lovingly through his silvery hair. Once she said, softly:

"I grieve to leave you, Father; but for myself—the God of Help comes in the quiet darkness, and doth warm my trembling soul beneath his smile. But 'tis sad to leave you, old and alone in the world. Naturally, I had expected to outlive you, and had thought that when death came to claim you, that you would pass away with your head resting on my breast. But now, oh, I must go, and who will care for my poor old father?"

The next morning as Edna sat beside the bed, Mamie said:

"You will see Mr. Guthrie sometime. Tell him that with my dying breath I prayed for him and his. There are depths in a true woman's nature that he never fathomed. Tell him that when fair young daughters grow up about him, then he will

realize that it is no light thing for a man to win the precious jewel of a young girl's love, merely for the pleasure of observing the last bright rays it may emit, as he casts it from him into the sea of oblivion."

An hour later, as Edna sat beside Mamie, brushing out her long, dark hair, and speaking to her of that other world, and of death as but passing through the veil that divides this world from the unseen, Mamie put out her thin, white hand, and softly stroking Edna's cheek, said:

"You have been as God's own angel to me. Never was there a kinder friend than you have been to me, and you have pictured the New Jerusalem for me, until I can see it always before my eyes. You have brought flowers to cheer me in my sickness, and I pray that all the holy angels may spread flowers in your pathway, until you come to join me where the 'nations walk in white.' If the inhabitants of that other world do know the friends of this, oh, I will give you a joyful welcome there!"

Presently she said: "If Frank Allen comes today, as usual, to inquire after me, bid him come in. I wish to speak to him."

It was but a few minutes until he came. Mr. Howard met him at the door, and was telling him the condition of the sufferer, and the young man's face was overspread with an expression of inexpressible sadness. A look of pleasure passed over

his face, however, when Edna communicated to him Mamie's desire; but when conducted to the sick room, he was evidently shocked to behold the change wrought by disease in the beautiful face of his beloved; and when he clasped in his large, brown hand, the frail, white one which she held out to him, he was unable to control his emotion.

"Don't grieve for me, Frank," she said, looking at him, mournfully. "Don't! It hurts me to see you all weep so over parting from me, when I go so gladly."

"Oh, Mamie!" he exclaimed, "I love you so, I have loved you all my life; and it is worse than death to me to see you suffer."

"Yes, I know you love me. Since I have lain here, I have though much of your patient, tender love for me. I remembered how you used to take me to school upon your sled when we were children; how you always watched over me, and feared lest I should feel the cold of winter or the heat of summer; and how, when mother died and I felt so folorn and desolate, you came and wept with me, and tried to comfort me; and when I grew up you were always patient with my wilful ways. I once expected to spend my life at your side; but—he came and changed my world for me. But I know now that you are far the nobler of the two. I hope and pray that you will be happy yet, Frank. Sometime you will win a fair

young wife who will value your true, noble nature as you deserve."

"Never will there be a wife of mine," he said huskily. "You hold all my heart-strings in your weak, white hands, and with the closing of your eye-lids all the brightness and sweetness of my life shall die out; and often, often through winter's snows, or summer's soft twilight, I shall come and weep over your grave."

She looked sadly at him and said, "Be true to your noble nature, and your God, and we shall meet in the Glad Beyond."

Then she closed her eyes faintly, and casting one last, lingering look at the beloved face, he passed out of the room.

Mamie lived on yet another day, but she gradually grew weaker and weaker, her breath coming in faint gasps, and finally ceased. Then came a low, shuddering moan, a triumphant brightness overspread her features, and they knew that the soul had parted from the body.

Rest, fond true heart, thy pains are o'er; For thee earth pangs doth cease; And love can bruise thy heart no more, Thou hast entered into peace.

The grief of her heart-broken father was painful to witness. Mrs. Atwood, who was present, vainly strove to console him; but he sat in his dusky cor-

ner pathetically shaking his grey head, and ejaculating in disconnected sentences—

"Oh, woe is me! My poor, wounded dove! My broken flower! Oh, woe is me! My nestling is taken from me! Oh, that the grave would cover my sorrow!"

A cold, drizzling rain had been falling all day, and toward evening, when Edna had done all she could to adorn and beautify the bed of death, she went to the window and looked out into the gathering gloom. How cold and dreary it seemed; in a distant part of the yard she perceived a man standing beneath a tree, gazing steadily at the house. In a moment she knew it was Frank Allen, and her heart bled for his patient sorrow. Going out upon the porch she beckoned him to her.

"My dear friend," she said, "you must not mourn so hopelessly; it would grieve Mamie could she know. Here is a lock of her hair which she bade me cut off and give to you."

He trembled with emotion as he received the tress of hair, and he said: "Oh, Miss Carlisle, may I see her now, that I may bid her good-bye, unwatched by curious eyes?"

"Surely you may," she answered, and led the way to where the young girl lay, apparently in peaceful slumber.

A white rose was nestling in her dark hair, and one hand clasped to her bosom a cluster of hearts-ease.

Edna looked out of the window through a mist of blinding tears, while he took leave of his dead love.

She could hear the sobbing of a strong soul in hopeless agony; then he became more tranquil, and before he left she heard him saying softly:—

"I have loved you, Mamie, long and deep.

I will put a flower in the sweet, cold hand.

There, that is our secret, peacefully sleep.

'You will wake, and remember, and understand.'"

CHAPTER XXVI.

SAINT AND SINNER.

"But upon your fair, fair forehead no regrets nor griefs are dwelling,

Neither sorrow nor disquiet do the peaceful features know; Nor that look, whose wistful beauty seems their sad hearts to be telling,

'Daylight breaketh, let me go!'"

We will no longer dwell upon a sorrowful incident, nor pause to relate how the whole neighborhood turned out to weep with Mr. Howard over the loss of his darling. Loving hands had covered her coffin with white, fragrant flowers, the summer's drifted snow. And upon her cold, white face, across which no living light would ever again play, smile, tender and holy rested.

"Calm, and draped in snowy raiment, she lies still, as one that dreameth,

And a grave, sweet smile hath parted dimpled lips that may not speak;

Slanting down that narrow sunbeam like a ray of glory gleameth On the sainted brow and cheek."

"Asleep in Jesus, blessed sleep," they sang before taking her away from loving eyes, to lay her in her lowly bed to sleep peacefully, serenely, unawaked by song birds, the flutter of autumn leaves, or drift of winter's snow. No, never would those dropt lids open again, until she is awaked to look upon the beauty of the New Heaven and New Earth, and hear the King of kings say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father."

We will leave the readers to picture for themselves the grief of the heart-broken father and loving friends as they gaze for the last time on the mortal remains of Mamie Howard.

And now we would recall your mind from the lonely grave, and beg you to stray with us in fancy to the home of Edna Carlisle.

Upon the morning of which we write, Mrs. Evert and Edna are waiting with considerable anxiety for the return of the doctor, who has been absent ever since the previous afternoon.

It is the week succeeding the burial of Mamie, and sickness and death seem to be hovering over the whole country; Dr. Evert finds himself quite unable to answer all the calls made upon him, although he waits both day and night upon his patients.

Speaking of him, Mrs. Evert said uneasily,-

"He is taxing his strength too much. He takes no time for sleep or rest, and I fear he will be ill himself, and then he will find that it had been the greater kindness to others, as well as himself, if he had husbanded his strength."

"Yonder he comes, Auntie," exclaimed Edna, who had been standing at the window gazing in the direction whence he was expected.

Presently Dr. Evert entered the house, looking decidedly sleepy and exhausted, and Mrs. Evert met him in the hall to exchange loving greetings.

Their love was of the highest type; having begun in early life it had grown and strengthened, until it had become what God meant love to be—the highest, holiest, purest sentiment pertaining to this mortal life.

After he had entered the dining-room, and greeted Edna, he sank wearily into a chair, saying, in answer to their loving inquiries:

"Yes, I am quite worn out; but I have an elixer here that will brace me up wonderfully, I think—a letter from Flossie. The letter is addressed to you, Nellie," he added, as he tossed the letter to his wife.

Mrs. Evert received it with shining eyes, and her cheeks flushed with a glow of mother-love as she opened the letter and read aloud:—

"My Dear, Dear Mamma:—If I can keep the tears out of my eyes long enough, I will try to write you a short letter. Don't be alarmed, I am only home-sick. Sometimes I wish that I could get really and truly sick; then papa would come to see me, and perhaps you would come also. I want to see you, oh, so much! I have covered this sheet of paper with kisses because I knew it would be held in the hands of my dear, lovely mamma. What would I not do to be permitted to

be with you all this evening! I think I would be willing to be clothed in 'sack-cloth and ashes' (though I haven't the faintest idea what a dress of that kind looks like) if I could but sit upon my papa's lap, and hear him call me his 'tow-headed lassie.' I used to fret dreadfully at being called that, but now I would even submit to being called 'tow-head,' for the sake of hearing his dear voice again. But oh, how I have been annoyed lately about my hair. My tormentor was our bald-pated Professor of Mathematics. I never liked him; it always seemed to me that he shamefully abused the privilege of being ugly; but recently he has annoyed me greatly by pouring flatteries into my unwilling ears, in season and out of season, and by passing his hand caressingly over my curls until I became so disgusted I shuddered at the sight of him. For several days I tried to coil my hair upon my head out of his way; but it is so kinky it looked horrid. In my vexation I would have had my hair clipped close to my head, only I feared you would never forgive me if I did. Finally I despaired of ever being able to wear it in any manner except curled; so I brushed my curls over my finger again, quarreling tearfully that my hair was not straight.

"That day after our lessons were over, I was obliged to return to the school-room for a book that I needed. I found the room empty, and after obtaining the book I desired, I went to the window

and stood looking out, observing the view that lay before my eyes like a beautiful picture. A feeling of home-sickness swept over me as it recalled to my mind my own dear home, and loved ones there. And while I stood there struggling with my emotion, I heard a step beside me, and on looking around I beheld the obnoxious Professor at my side. (His head is perfectly bald excepting for a fringe of hair which grows around the base, and the sunlight falling upon it made it glisten and shine, until it seemed wonderfully large.) Taking one of my long curls in his hand he said,—'I am pleased, Miss Flossie, that you are wearing your hair in curls again. It is so beautiful; I admire your hair-' I retreated a step from him, saying a little disdainfully—'You admire hair? Yes, I presume so. It seems to be a law of nature to admire that which we do not ourselves possess.' I was about to add, that I had heard that the hairs of a man's head are all numbered, and strongly advising him to try to obtain some of the 'back numbers,' but he looked so crest-fallen that I forebore. Since then he has only spoken to me when necessary, and my curls can float in peace.

"My health is good, and I am keeping up well in my studies; and I am counting the days—nay, almost the hours, until I can return home. I never imagined that it would be so lonely here without Violet. I cried a whole handkerchief full of tears about it last night, and as a compensation dreamed

that we were having a grand ride across the country together.

"Good-bye, dear Mamma, I feel better now that I have told you how miserable I am. Don't worry about me, I shall get along nicely. School will soon be over and I shall be the happiest girl alive, and papa can call me 'tow-head' just as often as he pleases.

"With love and kisses I am
"Affectionately, Your Flossie."

Dr. Evert had listened to the reading of Flossie's letter with alternate smiles and sighs. "Poor little lassie," he said, "she must be very homesick."

"What can we do?" Mrs. Evert inquired anxiously.

"I think it would be well for you to write to her that we will both come to see her soon, unless sickness continues to prevail at the present rate. In that case you will go alone unless Edna chooses to accompany you."

Still talking of the absent one, he sat down to breakfast.

Edna stole away to the conservatory, and returning, laid a cluster of violets beside his plate. "Ah, I know what that means," he said. "You know that I am longing to see my Flossie, and nothing seems to bring her so near as her favorite flower."

After finishing his repast he took from his pocket a city paper and began to read the morning news.

A few minutes later he exclaimed with a start, "Can it be possible! Edna, my child, listen to this!" and he read aloud,—

"'ATTEMPTED BURGLARY.

"'Last night two burglars entered the jewelry store of Ives and Son. They were discovered by policeman Mitchell, who attempted to arrest them. One of the men escaped; the other in desperation fired at the officer, but missed, and the policeman in self-defense shot the man dead. He proves to be a notorious character named George Slater. Coroner's inquest will be held to-day."

Edna gave a low, shuddering cry, then reflecting a moment, said:

"I must let mother know."

"What for!" exclaimed Dr. Evert, in surprise.

"I think she will want to give him a decent burial," Edna replied, in a low tone.

"Then she is a fool!" he exclaimed, angrily.

"Let them bury him where they please, and 'good riddance to bad rubbish,' I say!"

"But he was her husband," said Edna. "God himself could not change that fact."

"I think Edna is right," said Mrs. Evert. "Her mother should be notified, and allowed to use her own judgment in the matter." Edna rose, saying: "I feel sure that mother will want to claim the body. I will go to her on the first train, and if such is her desire, I will accompany her upon her painful errand." She stopped, and shuddered. "It is a disagreeable task, but it is duty."

Dr. Evert's face softened, and he said: "I suppose you are in the right about it. I believe that women think with their hearts instead of their heads, anyway. However, I feel distressed because it is impossible for me to get time to accompany you after the remains, and I dislike the idea of your going without a male escort."

"I think you can rely on Homer Atwood," Mrs. Evert interposed.

"I am sure of it," Dr. Evert replied. "I will see him about it this morning."

"Do not worry, child," he added, turning to Edna; "we will do all that can be done under the painful circumstances."

A few hours later Edna stood at her mother's door. Silently she entered the hall and peeped into the sitting-room. Her mother was sitting at the sewing-machine, stitching up a silk basque which was, doubtless, to be worn by some village belle.

In an arm-chair by the fire-place sat the aged grandmother. On her lap lay an open book, but she was not reading; she had taken off her spectacles and was gazing intently into the fire. Memory was evidently drawing pictures of the "long ago."

A movement upon Edna's part, caused her mother to look up, and discover her there; and she sprang up with a glad cry of welcome. The grandmother, too, arose, trembling with surprise and pleasure.

Presently Edna revealed her errand. Mrs. Slater sat for a time pale and silent; finally, she said:

"I must go for the body and give it decent burial. I promised before God and man to honor and obey him; his own actions prevented me from fulfilling that vow in spirit, but his remains shall be duly honored."

Edna drew a purse from her pocket and laid it in her mother's lap.

Mrs. Slater's face flushed painfully, and she said:

"I hate to take this money, for I already feel burdened with the favors I have received at the hands of Dr. Evert."

"Do not hesitate to take it, Mother," Edna replied, kissing her pale cheeks. "I earned every cent of it;" adding, with a smile, "this is money that I received for my 'brain wares."

"My blessed child!" said her mother, tearfully, "it seems hard to take your earnings to bury him, when he was so unkind to you."

"Think not of that," said Edna, "I am thankful to possess the means."

And that was the only reference that either of them ever made to the past life of the man at whose hands they had both suffered so much.

The next morning Homer met them at the depot, and went with them for the remains. He had been to the city the previous day and had identified the body, and engaged an undertaker to take charge of the funeral arrangements.

On the face of the dead man a scowl of hate and pain rested, which was dreadful to see. He had been cut off in the height of his evil passions, and even death, the end of all things, could not hide the impress of theft, and hate, and murder.

Edna looked once upon the face of the dead, then drew back with a low, shuddering cry, and covered her face with her hands.

Silently he was borne to the hearse, and silently they followed him to the country grave-yard. Dark clouds overhung the earth, and it was snowing fast when they entered the cemetery.

Dr. Evert and wife, and a few other friends, had met at the open grave and were awaiting them.

After a few words of prayer, they silently, and without a tear of sorrow. lowered the coffin into the grave.

They could not sing-

[&]quot;Asleep in Jesus, blessed sleep"

over this dead body, and Homer could not speak to them in eloquent sentences (as he had done over the grave of Mamie Howard), of hope shining triumphant and star-like over the lonely grave.

Truly "the way of the transgressor is hard."

As the frozen clods were falling upon the coffin, Edna drew back a few paces and clasped in a loving embrace the cold, marble monument which marked her brother's grave. After the other grave was heaped, Mrs. Slater also came and stood beside Archie's grave. She had not seen the spot for years, and all the pent up shame, remorse and grief of years, broke from her lips in a low wail of agony, as she sank beside the grave, crying:

"Oh, Archie, my love, my murdered darling!"
After her emotion was spent, Homer touched her
arm, and said:

"Mrs. Slater, observe this rose bush; there is no sign of life about it. It is apparently dead in the embrace of winter. But the genial sun will shed its beams upon it, and it will hear the voice of spring, and will blossom in renewed beauty. Just so the Sun of Righteousness will beam upon this grave, and your beloved child will hear the voice of the King of kings, calling him forth, all glorified and fair."

By and by they passed slowly out of the cemetery, pausing a moment to glance at the new made

grave. Already it was covered with flakes of snow.

Kind nature was spreading a white mantle alike over the grave of saint and sinner.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AMONG THE FLOWERS.

"Give her the sun—sweet light, and duly
To walk in shadow, nor chide her part;
Give her the rose, and truly, truly—
To wear its thorn with a patient heart."

After the burial of Mr. Slater, Edna returned home with her mother, gladdening them with her companionship for two weeks. Hers was such a strong, cheery nature, so full of faith and hope, that her presence had much the same effect in her mother's cottage, that a sunbeam has in a prison cell, or a pot of sweet, fragrant violets has in the room of an invalid.

In her absence Mrs. Evert went to see Flossie, and their visits ended, they both returned home about the same time.

The day after their return Dr. Evert invited some friends from the city to dine with them, and, as he believed with all his heart that no gathering could be complete without Homer Atwood, he had been urgently solicited to be present.

Homer had replied that his mother was not well, and that unless her health improved, he would feel obliged to forego the pleasure of attending.

The afternoon previous to that event, Mrs. Evert and Edna drove over to see Mrs. Atwood. They were admitted by a neat, blue-eyed, brown-haired

girl, named Alice Ferrell, whose adoption into Mrs. Atwood's household, in the capacity of servant, had created much talk in the neighborhood a few years previous.

The mother of Alice was a widow, financially poor, weak in intellect, and morally depraved; and as the girl grew up people began to toss about her good name, passing it lightly from lip to lip.

When Mrs. Atwood heard how the girl was situated, she went to her, and by promise of large pay and light work, induced Alice to come to Atwood's in the capacity of servant, and in the seclusion of her peaceful home, Mrs. Atwood gently and lovingly taught the young girl the way of Life, carefully removing all obstructions from her way, that the path of well-doing should be made as pleasant as possible to her unaccustomed feet.

By and by Mrs. Atwood was permitted to see the fruits of her labors, for Alice began to tread with joy the path of peace and holiness, and she almost worshiped the saintly, white-haired woman, who had plucked her as "a brand from the burning."

When Mrs. Evert and Edna were admitted to Mrs. Atwood's presence, they found her much better, and able to receive them in the drawing-room.

"I am trying very hard to get well," she said, smilingly. "I am very anxious Homer should accept your invitation for this evening, and he is so foolish about leaving me when I am ill."

At this moment Homer came in. Returning

home from the village, he had recognized their sleigh in waiting, and hence came in with shining eyes to greet his visitors.

An hour was spent in pleasant conversation, and Edna could not help noting the reverent, loving deference which Homer's manner expressed for his mother. His cordial friendliness toward Mrs. Evert, and rather a mixture of all these feelings evinced toward herself.

To her eyes he represented the highest type of manhood; strong, cheery, and wise, yet loving and gentle; and as a crowning virtue, he had consecrated his wealth, and youth, and all the powers of his being, to the service of God and humanity.

After a while Mrs. Atwood turned to Edna, saying: "Yesterday I received from Chicago a box filled with flowering plants, which Esther had selected with great care. Would you like to see them."

Edna replied that she would be pleased to look at the flowers, and Mrs. Atwood begged they would excuse her inability to accompany them to the conservatory, as she was feeling too weak to do so, but Homer would show them with pleasure.

Mrs. Evert declined to go, saying that she would see them some other time, for the present she preferred to remain and chat with her old friend.

When Edna entered the conservatory she was filled with surprise and admiration, for it con-

tained the largest and most carefully selected collection of plants that she had ever seen.

Passionately fond of flowers, it was impossible for her to look calmly upon such a bewildering array of beauty and fragrance. At the end of the conservatory, over a cluster of orange trees, which were in full bloom, hung gilded cages, filled with singing birds of many climes, while two or three uncaged canaries flitted about at their own sweet will.

As they entered the conservatory a parrot called loudly, "Who are you! Who are you!" Homer laughingly rebuked its impertinence; then it chattered on as aimlessly and flippantly as some society woman.

Edna was was in an ecstasy of delight, and passed from flower to flower with glowing cheeks and beaming eyes.

Homer smilingly read her expressive face, as he pointed out the characteristic beauty of each plant, many of which had been placed there many years before by his father.

At last they came to a collection of pansies; all sizes and hues of the flower were represented, and Edna paused beside them with a low exclamation of delight.

"Oh, I think pansies are the sweetest flowers that grow," she said, with a thrill of pleasure in her tones.

"I am very fond of them too," he replied. "If I

should gather you a bouquet would you honor me by wearing it this evening?"

He gathered a cluster of purple and gold-hearted pansies, and with deft fingers, artistically arranged with them some orange blossoms, saying, "This is another favorite flower of mine; they are so pure and fragrant."

Then he formed a green background of soft, feathery ferns, and was about to offer the bouquet for her acceptance, but paused, saying—

"Do you understand the language of flowers? It was a favorite pastime with my sister to read the sentiment of a bouquet.

"Let me see how this reads. Orange blossoms mean, Your purity equals your loveliness; Pansy, Thoughts, and Fern, Sincerity.

"My thoughts are that your purity equals your loveliness sincerely. No, that isn't right. Your purity equals your loveliness, I think (think will do for thoughts,) sincerely. Pshaw! that won't do. However, please accept it, and pray believe that I sincerely think that your purity equals your loveliness; which I assure you is no small compliment."

Then smiling at her blushing face, he kindly changed the subject, telling her that he had been that afternoon to see Mr. Howard depart for Minnesota, where he had a sister residing, with whom he expected to make his home.

Then in a few eloquent terms—which came nat-

urally to him—Homer called before her mind a sorrowful picture of the aged, grief-stricken man, bidding adieu to his once happy, but now desolate home.

Tears gathered in Edna's eyes, and she said—"Oh, I am so sorry for him! My heart aches at his sorrow."

Homer replied, "I deeply sympathize with him, but I am still more sorry for Frank Allen."

"O no," she said eagerly, "he will get over it by and by; but her father will mourn for her all his life."

"Is a heart's true love an emotion so easy to get over?" he questioned meaningly. Then observing her blushing confusion, he continued—

"Her father will doubtless grieve for her all his life; but undoubtedly his time on earth is short; while Frank has the prospect of a long life before him, through which he will go always feeling at heart a sense of pain and loss."

"Did you ever read Jean Ingelow's beautiful lines which describe a man going through life, his heart empty of love; and although light and beauty his life were "thrilling," he pathetically adds,

"Then he goes on to describe how he went out unconsciously guided by fate to the girl whose love was to fill his empty heart; while she, also obey-

[&]quot;'But in the hollow of my heart,
There ached a place that wanted filling."

ing a law of fate, was unconsciously awaiting him. Then he describes their meeting and exultantly adds,—

""But now it is a year ago,
But now possession crowns endeavor;
I took her in my heart, to grow,
And fill the hollow place forever."

Edna glanced once into the eyes which were beaming upon her so ardently. Then over her fair face the rose bloom quickly spread, and she stood there awed and mastered by the love she saw in his dark eyes.

At that moment, greatly to her relief, she heard Mrs. Evert calling to her that they must immediately return home, else they would be late for dinner. And so bidding their friends a gay adieu, Mrs. Evert and Edna drove rapidly homeward, where, all unknown to them, a pleasant surprise awaited them.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"DIVIDED."

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As we have said, a pleasant surprise was in store for Mrs. Evert and Edna. In their absence Earl Whitney had arrived and was anxiously awaiting their return. With eager eyes he observed them coming up the drive, and when the sleigh stopped he went out to assist them to alight.

Edna arose with a little cry of surprise and pleasure, and as Earl assisted her from the sleigh he could not resist the impulse to kiss her blushing face.

"Why, Earl!" cried Mrs. Evert, laughing, "I had no idea that you were brave enough to commit so great a theft with such a watchful dragon as myself present."

"My dragon-eyed Auntie has no terrors for me where this sweet face is concerned," Earl smilingly retorted.

After Mrs. Evert had given him her warm, characteristic greeting, and they were sitting by the parlor fire, she said,—"How is it, Earl, that you have come so unexpectedly to visit us?"

He replied, "I had no notion of being here at the present time until a few hours previous to my departure. But, Auntie, I staid away just as long as I could. Like Adam, I have found that it is not good for man to be alone; and my errand here is to plead with my Eve to come and cheer me in my loneliness."

"In that case," said Mrs. Evert, as she arose to leave the room, "I would advise you to postpone making your petition until a more convenient season; for Edna and I must immediately go and dress for dinner, as we are expecting guests to arrive in a few minutes."

Edna lingered a moment after Mrs. Evert had left the room, and said,

"Why is it you wish to hasten our marriage, Earl?"

He replied, "I desire it first of all because I love you, and that being the case it is not unnatural, I believe, for me to wish for your company; and secondly (averting his face), I wish it because I find it impossible to overcome my intemperate habits; but I feel sure that if we were married and I had the constant shield of your presence, I could overcome this evil habit."

She looked sadly at him, saying: "Many a man before you has said and thought that, and yet when the woman that loved him believed his words and the vision that hope painted for her fond eyes, she had only to find at length that she was powerless to save him. That her part was to stand by with tearful eyes and bleeding heart, and see the wreck of her idol gradually sink into a drunkard's grave. O, I know too well the suffering

this evil habit entails; have I not already suffered enough from its consequences?

"Don't you see, Earl, the task may be made comparatively easy? Only vow that you will never touch another glass of anything which intoxicates, then the battle will be between you and one glass; surely you are man enough to come off conqueror in a case like that."

"I have often thought of that," he replied; but when my friends beg me to drink with them"—

"Please don't call them friends," she exclaimed.

"Well, when my acquaintances"—he began, but she interposed—

"Enemies is the more appropriate term. If a man tries to persuade you to do that which will disgrace your manhood and will eventually result in shutting out all your life's fair aims, is not that man your enemy?"

"It would appear so," Earl replied.

"Then what you were about to say was virtually this.

"'When my enemies ask me to drink with them I cannot refuse, although I am aware that my doing so will cause the hearts that love me to bleed.' Is not that it?"

Then she raised her tearful, pleading eyes to his saying,—"Surely, Earl, if you love me you can overcome this evil habit."

"Do you doubt my love?" he inquired.

"I doubt your desire to retain my love. Can't

you see, Earl, that you are slowly, surely, killing my love for you?" Then with her face quivering with emotion, she turned and left the room.

She had gone only a few steps up the stairway, when Earl, following her into the hall, called,

"Edna!"

"At the sound of her name she paused, and he came around to the side of the stairway, so that his head was almost on a level with her own. Looking up at her with great, troubled eyes he said,—

"Edna, do you mean I should infer that you have ceased to love me?"

"No," she said in a tremulous voice, as she leaned over the balustrade and passed her hand lightly over his bright waves of hair. "No, I said you were slowly, surely killing my love for you. But rest assured that you will always be very dear to me, even though we may never marry." Then she went on and left him standing there sad and alone.

When Edna came down again their guests had all assembled, and Homer's eyes lighted up with pleasure when he saw that she wore his flowers.

The occasion was one of unbroken pleasure to all present; and toward the close of the evening Dr. Evert, who was quite proud of the beauty and intellect of his adopted child, begged Edna to read them one of her poems.

The others seconded his request, but she smil-

ingly replied that she really could not have the cruelty to inflict one of her poems upon them; instead she would recite them one, written by a poet, who as a word painter, she could never hope to equal.

Then she arose, and with one white hand resting lightly upon the crimson back of her chair, she repeated those beautiful lines called "Divided."

Glancing at Earl with a shy, sweet smile, she repeated the lines which so vividly describe two lovers going forth together, while love and joy fill their hearts, beauty surrounds them, and life seems blithe and fair. And then with a grave, sweet, smile resting upon her lips she said—

"Light was our talk as of faery bells— Faery wedding-bells, faintly rung to us Down in their fortunate parallels."

Earl had never heard the poem before, but knowing Edna's voice so well, he could detect in it a ring of suppressed emotion; and he leaned eagerly forward to learn the sequel.

Her sweet voice goes on thrilling them with its music, as she describes the lovers wandering on, hand in hand, through the gay, bright world with songs of joy on their lips, until they come to that almost undefinable, imperceptible something, under the similitude of a tiny stream, which is to eventually divide them.

"'Sing on! we sing in the glorious weather 'Till one steps over the tiny strand, So narrow, in sooth, that still together On either brink we go hand in hand."

Then the stream grows wider, and they are forced to unclasp their hands, and they wander sadly on with their—"Songs all done."

Then her heart is pierced with sorrow as she perceives that the stream grows wider and wider, and she pleads with him to come back to her,—"For the wavelets swell." But he replies that he may not come,

"And the voice beside her Faintly reacheth, though heeded well."

""Then cries of pain, and arms outstretching—
The beck grows wider and swift and deep;
Passionate words as of one beseeching—
The loud beck drowns them; we walk and weep."

Earl knew now, by the feeling that Edna threw into the recitation, that she felt it to be a faithful picture of their life; and he leaned his face upon his hand with a voiceless sob.

Still her sweet voice, full of inexpressible sadness, goes on, telling how the aspect of the world had changed to them, while the stream grows wider and wider, and swifter and swifter, until it becomes a great broad river, and the beloved form is so far away that it seems "Only a speck on the farther side," which she watches with tearful eyes and quivering lips.

Throwing a world of agony into her tones, Edna exclaimed—

"'Farther, farther—I see it—know it—
My eyes brim over, it melts away;
Only my heart to my heart will show it
As I walk desolate day by day."

Then pausing a moment as if to control her emotion, she added in a voice whose pathetic sorrow drew tears to her listeners' eyes,

"' And yet I know past all doubting, truly—
And knowledge greater than grief can dim—
I know, as he loved, he will love me duly—
Yes, better—e'en better than I love him.

"'And as I walk by that vast calm river,
The awful river so dread to see,
I say, Thy breadth and thy depth forever,
Are bridged by his thoughts that cross to me.'"

There was silence through the rooms for a moment after Edna finished the poem. Then, while the others were warmly praising the poem and her elocutionary powers, Earl arose and hastily left the room.

She saw him no more that evening until after their guests had departed, and she was about to leave the drawing-room to retire to her own room. He came in with haggard face, and laying one hand heavily on her shoulder, said,—

"Were you thinking of us—of me—when you recited that poem?"

"Yes," she faltered.

"Edna!" he exclaimed, excitedly, "I cannot, will not give you up."

"Then recross the *stream*, Earl," she eagerly replied. "Cross while you may; though joined in heart, we are divided now by a barrier as dark and portentous as that swiftly flowing stream."

CHAPTER XXIX.

"CHARITY SUFFERETH LONG AND IS KIND."

"Thick waters show no images of things;
Friends are each other's mirrors and should be
Clearer than the crystal, or the mountain springs,
And free from clouds, design, or flattery,
For vulgar souls no part of friendship share;
Poets and friends are born to what they are."

Edna was deaf to all of Earl's pleas for an early marriage.

"No, Earl," she said, "I cannot marry you under the present circumstances. You have placed a stain upon your fair name that I cannot overlook. Blot that out, retrieve your lost ground, and become the noble creature that your God meant you to be when he endowed you with such goodly qualities of head and heart; then I will gladly and lovingly give you my hand in marriage, and I will be to you a true and loving wife all the days of my life.

"We are told in the Word of God that man is the head of the woman, even as Christ is the head of the church. The life you are at present leading fills me with shame when I think on it. And do you think that I, who am earnestly striving to live a pure and righteous life,—if I married you now, could I look up to you with that love and reverence with which the church must regard Christ, its head?"

"But, Edna!" Earl exclaimed, shame and anger contending in his heart, "am I not to be taken into account? Are you not willing to help me to conquer this evil habit and regain my former honorable position?"

"I will gladly do aught in my power to assist you," she replied.

"Then become my wife," he said, eagerly. "Constant companionship with your pure nature will lead me up to a higher plane of existence; and the shield of your love will protect me from evil influences."

She looked at him, smiling tearfully. "I know you believe that," she said. "But that is the sand-bar upon which so many lives have been wrecked. If I cannot save you now, Earl, I could not if we were married. My love should be your shield now, just as truly as if we were married. And we can easily test the influence of my presence. Let some one fill your place in the bank this summer, and do you remain here. In our pure country life you will be free from the temptations that would surround you in the city. And if 'by faithful continuance in well doing' you prove that my companionship has the influence which you ascribe to it—then 'when the autumn tinges the greenwood, turning all its leaves to gold,' I will lay my hand in yours and vow before God and man to love, honor, and obey you all the days of my life."

And though disappointed, Earl was compelled to accept her decision.

So he remained at Dr. Evert's, and honestly tried to lead a better, purer life.

After two months of his probation had worn away, he said to her one evening:—

"Edna, am I not proving to you that I can withstand temptation?"

She smiled sadly as she replied:—

"You are proving that you can do without the use of intoxicants. But will you be able to resist temptation when solicited to drink by your—what shall we call them—friends? or enemies?"

"Enemies," he smilingly replied; "I accept your definition; but you are much mistaken if you think I have no temptation here. A few days ago when I was over at Rochester I was sorely tried; as I passed a saloon I heard the clinking of glasses, and looking around I beheld a man turning a glass of liquor to his lips. Immediately a very demon of evil thirst possessed me, and I felt that I would give the whole world for a drink, if that were the price to be paid; and you will never know how desperately I struggled with the evil passion. I came off conqueror; but only the memory of your sweet face and pure life kept me from giving up the combat."

Laying her hand upon his arm, Edna said, in

sweet, trembling tones: "I thank you, Earl. Your words fill my heart with a gladness to which it has long been a stranger."

"My good angel," Earl murmured, as he kissed the dimpled hand resting upon his arm, "if you cannot lead me into a higher life, I am lost indeed. If you cannot save me from myself, I should go down though ten thousand angels contended for me."

Homer had believed that the engagement between Earl and Edna had been broken off; but when Earl came upon his present visit, and he and Edna were so often seen in each other's company, Homer decided that he had been mistaken; but he often wondered that she no longer wore her betrothal ring.

Every Sunday they occupied the same pew in church. Edna's fair face always expressed a reverent, intelligent interest in the sermon, and Earl's expression seemed to say, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian! but I can't do it. The sacrifice is too great."

Once while preaching, Homer observed this expression upon Earl's face, and striving to meet his friend's thoughts, said:

"The whole cross is more easily carried than half. It is the man who tries to make the best of both worlds who makes nothing of either. And he who seeks to serve two masters, misses the benediction of both. But he who has taken his stand;

who has drawn a boundary line, sharp and deep, about his religious life; who has marked off all beyond as forever forbidden ground to him, finds the yoke easy and the burden light."

Late one raw, chilly day, toward the last of April, as Homer was returning from making some calls, his way lay through the village, and as he was driving along in the dusk of the evening, he saw a group of boys gathered on the street corner, laughing and talking loudly.

Observing them more intently, he discovered that the object of their merriment was a young man, evidently intoxicated, who had just passed by. A second glance told Homer that he who was reeling along the street, laughing and talking to himself in gay good humor, was no other than Earl Whitney. The revelation came like a shock. Earl had apparently just left the saloon and started home; but his way lay through the most densely populated portion of the town, and ere tomorrow the whole country-side would hear of his disgrace.

Thinking thus, Homer began trying to devise some plan to hinder such results, for he felt that in so doing he would not only be doing the young man a kindness, but he would spare the household of Dr. Evert the shame and sorrow that Earl's appearance there, in his present condition, would cause.

Then the temptation came to Homer, "Let him

go on, when Edna sees him in his present degraded condition, surely she will cease to love him." But he cast the suggestion from him as utterly unworthy, and prayed for a double portion of that "charity which suffereth long and is kind."

Driving rapidly he soon overtook Earl, whose reeling steps were causing him to make slow progress. After much persuasion Homer finally induced Earl to get into the buggy, and then drove rapidly toward his own home.

It was getting dark when they reached there, and, as it fortunately occurred, Homer got his charge out of the buggy and up stairs into a room adjoining his own, unobserved by any one.

With patient kindness he staid in the room till Earl grew sleepy, then assisted him to bed, where he soon slumbered heavily.

He believed this was Earl's first transgression, and hoped to be able to so present the evils of intemperance to the young man when he awoke, that he would be induced to abstain from the use of intoxicants in the future.

Before leaving the room Homer stood and gazed long and intently at the sleeper; and as he surveyed the manly, graceful form, the face of uncommon beauty, and remembered that Earl possessed a gentle, loving disposition, and was in all respects eminently qualified to win the love of

the human heart, Homer sighed to himself, "I do not wonder that Edna loves him."

Then the master passion of his life—the desire to win souls for the garner of immortality—awoke, and he thought of Earl as a wanderer from the Father's house, feeding on the husks of the world, while the great storehouse of God is filled with blessings, and to spare.

Homer lay awake for hours that night, harassed by troubled thoughts. Earl was one of his earliest friends. How vividly he remembered the first time they had met. Homer at that time was about eight years old; it was the year Dr. Evert married and brought his bride to their present home. During the summer Mrs. Whitney came to visit them, and brought with her Earl, who was then a chubby, bright-eyed, dimple-cheeked boy of four years, whose long, golden curls soon became the admiration of Homer's boyish heart. And at that early age had been established the relations which they had ever since sustained towards each other.

Homer always regarded Earl with an indulgent fondness, as toward one to whom it was a delight to give pleasure; and to Earl, Homer had always seemed a being to be regarded with reverent admiration. Year by year these feelings increased until the two reached manhood. Then there was scarcely a perceptible break in their intercourse, although each of them had poured out the riches

of his heart at the feet of the same girl. Earl had never had other than a slight suspicion that Homer loved Edna, and feeling so sure that he possessed her love himself, he had scarcely given the subject a moment's thought.

While to Homer the knowledge that Earl was his rival, had come at the time that he learned Edna's love was never to be his; and his nature was too truly noble to harbor ill-will toward his friend for gaining the love which would have shed sunshine in his own life, if he had been the favored suitor.

And now, as a watchman upon the hills of Zion, he saw his old friend treading a dark and dangerous path; and his soul was filled with unrest, and he longed to rescue—to save.

Toward morning Homer fell asleep and dreamed that he saw Earl gradually slipping down into a fathomless abyss, frantically calling upon him for rescue. Then the form changed, and it was Edna who was calling pitifully to him for help. The dream was so vivid that he awoke frightened and trembling, and was thankful to find that it was indeed a dream.

It was late that morning ere Earl awoke. Homer explained what had occurred, and pleaded kindly and eloquently with Earl to refrain from the use of that which would dishonor his manhood and blight his life's fair promise.

Earl listened to all of his friend's entreaties with

silent, gloomy face; only once had he spoken, that was when he first learned what he had done, and in anguish of soul he cried out: "Oh, my God! I am lost, lost!"

And that white, despairing look never left his face all day, although Homer tried to encourage, and infuse some of his own hopeful spirit into that of his friend.

Finally Earl said: "It is no use. I will make no more vows only to break them. Oh, that I had never taken the first glass! To retrieve my lost ground now, is like attempting to walk up hill with ten thousand demons trying to pull me back."

He listened patiently to Homer's exhortations and entreaties, but the despairing anguish reflected in his pale face, went to the young preacher's heart, and drew tears to his eyes, that did not shame his manhood.

After breakfast (which the young men took alone), Homer, thinking to relieve Earl's burdened mind, invited him out to see the live stock.

It had been a custom of Homer's father never to keep any but animals and fowls of the best blood, and it was a custom that Homer had faithfully carried out after his father's death.

When the young men entered the barnyard, the horses came with gentle neighs to greet their master, the fowls flocked around him, the doves left their cots to meet him, and one settled upon his

shoulder, cooing softly and patting him with tender crimson feet. Bill, the coachman, stood in the barn-door looking out upon the scene with a broad, good-natured smile.

"He never comes into the barnyard but every blessed creature on the place follows him around, and talks to him in its own language as hard as ever it can."

Homer was scattering some seed to his fowls; now he looked up, smiling brightly. "That is bebause they recognize the hand that feeds them. It is only man, ungrateful man, who fails to do homage to the source from whence he receives his blessings."

Bill retreated into the stable, smilingly shaking his head, as though he would say, "That is the way he always turns the tables on me."

After luncheon Earl bade his kind friend goodbye, and with gloomy brow and sad forebodings at heart, returned to Evert Place.

CHAPTER XXX.

DARK WATERS.

"And thy love hath power upon me,
Like a dream upon a brain;
For the loveliness which won me,
With the love too doth remain;
And my life it beautifieth,
Though love be but a shade;
Known of only ere it dieth,
By the darkness it hath made."

Gossip had not been silent during Earl's absence, but had carried the news of his transgression to Dr. Evert's household, and spread sorrow and gloom over the hearts of all. As the day began to wear away without Earl's return, Edna grew nervously anxious.

In great disquietude she paced to and fro upon the veranda, gazing with wistful, troubled eyes in the direction whence he should come.

At last she descried him coming slowly down the road, and, woman like, now that she saw that the beloved one was safe, and her anxiety thus relieved, she grew faint, and was fain to clasp a pillar for support, and tears, which she vainly struggled to suppress, welled to her eyes and trembled on her jetty lashes.

As Earl approached her face was turned from him (indifferently he thought), and his heart throbbed more heavily, for he believed that she had heard all and meant to renounce him.

Sadly he gazed at her. Never before had she seemed so lovely to him. Her beautiful face seemed so pure, so spiritual—her dark blue dress exquisitely fitted her perfect form, and in pleasing contrast to her black hair and fair complexion, a soft, scarlet shawl was cast about her shoulders, and a scarlet ribbon nestled in her glossy tresses.

As Earl stepped upon the veranda she turned toward him, smiling tearfully, and held out to him one fair, dimpled hand.

Earl clasped it almost convulsively, then reading her expressive face a moment, he said, sadly:

"Edna, you have heard all?"

She inclined her head for answer, being unable to control her voice.

He stood there a minute holding her hand and gazing into the distance with a look of unutterable misery. Finally he said, huskily:

"Edna, I am so shamed, so crushed, so broken down, I scarcely care to live. Why should I live? I shall only go on drawing tears of sorrow from your dear eyes, grieving my friends, and at last perhaps sink into a drunkard's grave. No, it were better that I die now."

"Oh, Earl," she pleaded, "do not give up the battle. Say that by God's grace you will conquer this evil habit. Life has much in store for you.

Try again, Earl, I will not forsake you; let my love be your shield to save you from yourself."

"My sweet, sweet saint," he murmured, softly, then ended with a sigh. "I know I have every inducement to overcome this evil, and yet my soul is filled with despair."

That evening, after the lamps were lighted, Edna and Earl were left alone in the drawing-room, and seeing that he was silent and oppressed by sad thoughts, she—with the instinct of a true woman that perceives the moods of the loved one and acts accordingly, striving to comfort and cheer, though her own heart were breaking—went to the piano and played some soft, sweet melodies, while Earl lay upon the couch, drinking in the music which unconsciously soothed him, yet ever contrasting in his mind his past and present self.

After she had grown weary and had ceased

playing, he called her softly by name.

She came and stood beside him, sweetly submissive.

"Edna," he began, "all day my mind has been harassed by one thought. You told me once that when you ceased to respect me you would cease to love me. Tell me, darling, have I lost your love?"

"Not entirely, Earl," she answered, kindly and

sadly.

"You do not love me as you once did?" he inquired, looking into her face with great, despairing eyes.

"I should not be true to you or true to myself if I deceived you in this matter. I do not love you as I did a few months ago. Then I admired your noble traits of character, and I revered and loved you with my whole heart. Now you seem to me to be weak, and your character has a stain upon it. You have fallen from the high position which you occupied in my estimation, and I can no longer look up to and revere you; I can only cling fondly to you, and long to rescue and save you."

He sat quite silent for a moment, with a world of misery in his eyes. Then taking her hand and kissing it reverently, he said, in low, tremulous

tones:

"Edna, if I should go down you will never think it was because I did not love you?"

Then as she tearfully shook her head, he went on, his tones tremulous with emotions of love and sorrow:

"Darling! darling! I have loved you, do love you better than aught else in earth or heaven. I would count my life as naught if you were in danger. And yet, loving you as I do, I grieve you continually, and draw tears from your dear eyes, when I would far rather the pearly drops had been distilled from my heart's blood."

Utterly unmanned by grief, his form was shaken with emotion. Edna stooped and pressed her red lips to the waves of golden hair which covered his

handsome head, then clasping her hands in a desparing gesture, she exclaimed:

"How long! oh Lord, how long! ere this curse is

swept from our land?"

CHAPTER XXXI.

"THIS YOKE OF MINE THAT REACHES NOT TO YOU."

"It is not that I love you less
Than when before your feet I lay;
But to prevent the sad increase
Of hopeless love, I go away."

Early in the month of May, Homer received a letter from William Thoresby, an old college friend who was pastor of a church in New Orleans, stating that his health was failing, as was also that of his wife, and the warm spring weather had such a deleterious effect upon their health, that they felt that to preserve their lives they must go farther north before the hot summer months came on. Yet he disliked to do so, for his charge was a mission church, consisting of much rough material, and was very difficult to care for, and he greatly feared. the result if some careless pastor should come and fill his place. The letter was full of the one subject which was burdening the young minister's mind, and he poured out his trouble to Homer, much as he had been wont to do when they were room-mates at college.

After carefully considering the subject and consulting with his mother, Homer proposed to his friend an exchange of places for a few months.

The proposition was gladly accepted, and about

the middle of May Homer preached his farewell sermon to his little flock, who were sorely grieved to part from him.

The evening preceding his departure all of his friends were invited to his home to a sort of farewell social, and few indeed were they who did not accept the invitation. When the time arrived the grand old house seemed to be filled to overflowing with those who had come to see their young pastor for the last time for many months, and who could tell, perhaps it would be forever.

He was so beloved by them all, and had grown so into their hearts, entering so fully into their joys and sorrows, that they felt it indeed hard to give him up and see his place filled by a stranger. Refreshments were served, and the occasion was enlivened by music and song, and had it not been for the rending of tender ties it would have been a happy evening to all present.

Homer passed among his friends with a sad, sweet smile upon his face, and some kind words upon his lips for each—words cherished in the heart of the recipient to be remembered afterward with tears—yet to himself he seemed to see but the fair, sweet face of her who would always be shrined in his heart as his first and only love.

A pensive sadness brooded on Edna's face all evening, and as it waxed late Homer saw her slip quietly through a low, open window, that looked

out upon the lawn. In a moment he followed her, desiring to bid her good-bye alone.

The full moon was flooding the world with light; the balmy air was laden with the fragrance of blossoming trees and flowers, and through the shrubbery he saw the flutter of her white dress. She was standing somewhat remote from other loiterers upon the lawn, and in a moment he was beside her, saying:

"Pardon me for following you, but it is natural, I believe, that I should have an especial goodbye for you."

She turned to him a wistful, pleading face. "O, why do you go away? I would not have believed that you could be so unkind."

Promenading in the moonlight, with her hand resting lightly upon his arm, he told her of the points which had influenced him most in his decision. First, the benefit to the health of his old friend, which he hoped would be the result of the change; and as New Orleans was a portion of country over which yellow fever often swept, carrying off thousands in its destructive march, it seemed best that he, who was unmarried and possessed few kindred ties, should stand in the front ranks of the battle for the Lord of hosts.

He felt her hand tremble upon his arm, and as they were just passing a seat near the fountain, she paused, sighing, "Let me stop here and rest."

Sad for this their parting, she sat there, scarcely

daring to raise her soft, dewy eyes to his face; yet, the sweet, pensive voice, with its regretful pauses, seemed to mourn him an adieu, as he stood looking for perhaps the last time upon the beloved face, which the moonlight glorified and lent a beauty that scarcely seemed to be of earth.

Presently Homer spoke, and his voice was tremulous with deep emotion:

"I had not thought how hard it would be to part from all who are near and dear; but while absent from here I will ever be with you in thought. I wish you to remember that my love for you can know no change, and if any trouble should come to you (which God forbid), or there be any service which I can render, you will call upon me, will you not?"

For reply she laid one trembling hand in his.

Her downcast lashes, upon which glistening teardrops hung, were kissing her fair cheeks, and looking upon her thus, he yearned to take the whiterobed maiden to his heart and kiss away her tears.

"Edna, Miss Carlisle," he said, "once you gave me a rose; that was when my heart was beating high with the hope that your love was to bless my life. There is another rose in your hair now, would you give it me to rest against my heart, now that I am going away, leaving behind me all of the sweetness and sunshine of my life?"

She hesitated a moment, then began with tremb-

ling fingers to unfasten the rose, but the stem had caught in her silky tresses, so with gentle touch Homer released it, inly murmuring a blessing over the dear head. Then bestowing upon the rose the kiss he dared not give her, he repeated, in low, melodious tones, that went to her heart:

"'I can be patient, faithful, and most fond
To unacknowledged love; I can be true
To this sweet thralldom, this unequal bond,
This yoke of mine that reaches not to you.""

CHAPTER XXXII.

FARE THEE WELL.

"Fare thee weel, thou first and fairest;
Fare thee weel, thou best and dearest;
Thine be ilka joy and treasure,
Peace, enjoyment, love, and pleasure!
Ae fond kiss and then we sever,
Ae farewell, alas! forever!"

With the coming of June roses Flossie returned from school, and a few days later Ivy Whitney came from Chicago to spend the summer. For several weeks Earl had not once succumbed to the temptations of the wine-cup, and Edna grew more hopeful.

He had not wanted for gentle admonitions from Mrs. Evert, or good advice from the doctor; and when Flossie heard of his transgressions she stormed at him in a way that amused quite as much as it annoyed him. Then because he laughed at her spirited remonstrance, she abruptly left him, declaring, as a parting shot, that it made her angry to think that any one who put such a vile drink to his lips would ever dare to think of kissing her Violet.

But Ivy, like the vine for which she had been named, clung all the more fondly to her brother, now that he seemed to be falling away from former nobleness.

Ivy had grown fairer and gentler as she approached womanhood, and she looked so lovely in her snowy muslins and blue ribbons, that Edna laughingly told her that she was the fair counterpart of Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat.

When Edna had made some friendly inquiries concerning Mr. Ross, Ivy had blushingly acknowledged that she and Ross were betrothed, and she was only waiting, in obedience to her mother's command, until a few more years should be added to her life, ere she took upon herself the sacred name of wife.

One beautiful morning, about the first of June, Dr. Evert was going to the city, and Earl decided to go also. The three girls stood upon the veranda watching their departure and smilingly waving them adieus. It was expected that Dr. Evert and Earl would return in a few hours, but the hours glided swiftly by and still they did not come.

Late in the afternoon Flossie and Ivy went out for a ride. Mrs. Evert was in the library whiling away the time by reading the work of some favorite author. Near where she sat was an alcove, separated from the library by curtains; this was a favorite spot with Edna, and she was seated in it now, busily preparing the manuscript for a volume of poems which it was her intention to have published.

Being thus occupied, they were not aware of Dr. Evert's return until he came into the library.

Looking up when he entered, Mrs. Evert was startled by the expression of his face, and she exclaimed:

"What is the matter, Wilfred?"

"Earl has been hurt," he replied, "and I am so humiliated and ashamed, I don't know what to do."

"Hurt!" Mrs. Evert exclaimed. "How was he hurt?"

"Shot! and in a saloon at that," he answered, with a commingling of shame and anger in his voice.

At that, with a low cry, Edna drew back the curtains and stood before them, pale and trembling violently.

"My child," Dr. Evert began, "I was not aware that you were there, or I—"

But she interposed. "Tell me if he is seriously hurt, and how it happened."

He replied: "Earl is not fatally injured. He will recover in a few weeks, I think. After we reached the city I had some business to attend to, and he walked away with an acquaintance whom he had met. In a short time there was a commotion raised, and I learned that there had been a fight in a saloon near by, between two men, over a game of cards. Hastening to the scene of trouble, to my great surprise I found the injured man to be Earl, who, although he had not taken part in the

fray, received a stray bullet in his shoulder while trying to separate the combatants.

"We took him to a hotel and probed for the bullet, finally succeeding in obtaining it. He suffered very much and will be sick for many weeks, but I do not doubt that he will eventually recover."

"Did the probing for the bullet seem very painful to him?" Mrs. Evert inquired.

"Yes," the doctor replied, "but he did not feel it as much as might have been expected, for he had been drinking very freely before he was hurt, and at the time was very much under the influence of intoxicants."

Edna listened to Dr. Evert's words with bowed head and pale cheeks. She seemed crushed beneath the weight of shame and humiliation, and her love that before had grown weak, was now wounded unto death, and painfully bleeding its life away.

Only a few hours before Earl had said to her: "Like Jacob I serve for a wife, but I trust that mine will not be a seven years' service."

And she had answered: "Do you call it a service? I only ask you to prove that you are a free man."

Then Earl gravely replied: "Since you have not renounced me, it proves that you still have faith in me, and that has strengthened my resolutions until I feel that I am stronger than I was

before, and I promise you that I will never again raise to my lips anything which intoxicates."

Presently Ivy and Flossie returned, and upon being told what had occurred, Ivy desired to go immediately to Earl, and Mrs. Evert also expressed a like desire.

Approaching Edna, Mrs. Evert laid her hand upon the bowed head of the young girl with a gentle pitying gesture, and inquired if she would like to accompany them.

"No, Auntie," Edna replied, "not unless he becomes dangerously ill and wishes to see me; then I will go."

After hesitating a moment, Mrs. Evert said: "My dear child, I really believe that you must give Earl up. I am sorry to say this, for the misguided boy is very dear to me; but I cannot bear to see him weakly making shipwreck of your life as well as his own." Then tenderly kissing the girl's pale cheeks, Mrs. Evert went away to minister to Earl.

All evening Edna sat pale and silent, refusing to eat, and making only brief replies to all of Flossie's loving inquiries.

Flossie herself went quietly about the house, now crying softly and then angrily dashing the tears away and peering curiously into the library. Finally she approached Edna, and said: "Violet, you wouldn't commit suicide, would you?"

Edna smiled faintly. "Certainly not. Why do you ask, dear?"

Flossie replied, a little shame-facedly, "Because you looked so white and—and—awful. I was afraid."

"Then dismiss your fears," Edna replied. "I

am only fighting it out."

And she did fight it out, though the battle was a sore one; but ere she laid her head upon her pillow the old love was dead.

Ivy staid constantly with Earl, and Mrs. Evert went daily to see him, frequently accompanied by Flossie; but although he watched eagerly for her coming, Edna never went. His heart foreboded the worst from this, yet he hoped against hope; and one day when Mrs. Evert was leaving him to return home, he said sadly,

"Aunt Nellie, please tell Edna to come and see me, or send me some token that she remembers that I am still alive."

When Mrs. Evert came again she laid a rose in his hand, saying:

"Edna bade me give you this, and tell you that it was plucked from the same bush that bore the rose upon which she shed happy tears the morning after her betrothal to you. And she added that tears had been shed upon this rose also, but you could judge if they were happy tears."

Then Earl knew it was all over, and he turned his face to the wall and lay there quite silent for a long time. Then he asked Mrs. Evert to bring

him a tiny jewel case which she would find in the breast pocket of his coat.

She brought it and unfastened it for him, he being unable to use his left arm. In the case lay a withered rose and the fragments of their broken betrothal ring. Laying the fresh rose beside them, he looked sadly into her face, saying:

"Read my love story, Aunt Nellie. Between the roses over which she shed glad and sorrowful tears lies our broken betrothal ring, crushed by me! Oh, that I could undo the past! But it is too late to recross the stream now; we are indeed 'divided.' How vividly she realized when reciting that poem that it was a faithful picture of our lives. But I—blind fool that I was—went madly on, and could not see the end; and now, God help us, we are indeed 'divided.' I seem to hear her sweet voice say, as she said with such a tender ring of pathos that night,

"'But two are walking apart forever,
And wave their hands in a mute farewell."

That evening, as Ivy sat beside Earl, he told her that it was all over between him and Edna; then putting his uninjured arm around his sister's waist, he drew her to him, saying:

"My gentle Ivy, my sweet sister. You cling to me still, my Ivy, though I have gone down in ruin and disgrace."

She wept softly beside him; then when he turned

away as though he wished to sleep, she quietly withdrew and wrote a letter to Bertie Ross, explaining to him all that had occurred, and adding that it was Earl's intention to travel over the Western States as soon as his injuries would permit; and she finally ended by imploring Ross to come and make himself Earl's traveling companion, shield him as much as possible from temptation, and try if friendship could not accomplish what love had failed to do. When Earl was able to sit up he sent a note to Edna, imploring her to come to see him.

She came and found him much paler than she had expected. When Mrs. Evert and Ivy had quietly withdrawn to an adjoining room, Earl turned to Edna, who was standing at the window looking out through a mist of tears.

"Edna," he said, "is it all over? Have you ceased to love me?"

She bowed her head, unable to control her voice. Earl shivered as if a cold wind had blown upon him. After a pause he said—

"I do not wonder; I only wonder that your love has clung to me so long. In any case it is best that we should part, for if I did not cause you to hate me, I should break your heart, and I love you too sincerely to sacrifice your life to mine. Always remember that I love you purely and sincerely, and it breaks my heart to give you up. Yet I can truly say with the poet, 'It is better to have loved

and lost, than never to have loved at all.' I should have sunk long ago to a lower degradation than I have, had it not been that your love held me up."

"Earl!" she exclaimed, coming and standing beside him in trembling eagerness. "Earl, you will not let our parting cause you to become reckless, will you? You will always try your best to live a good, true life, will you not? Then as he hesitated, she added, "I would rather endure a life of pain and sorrow, than to know that you were lost through me."

Earl saw that he might hold her through that fear, and he struggled a moment with the temptation, but his love overcome all, and he replied—

"I will always remember that it would grieve you to know that I sank, and though I am a poor, weak creature, I will do my best to do right."

"Your promise has taken a great weight from off my heart," she said tearfully. "And now goodbye, Earl, your welfare will always be very, very dear to me."

He looked at her with a pale, pleading face,—
"Edna," he said, "I have loved you for years;
and I can not tear this love out of my heart now.
I think Flossie was right when she said that my
lips ought not to touch your pure face. But you
will kiss me once before you go, will you not? It
would seem like a blessing, a sacred sign."

Stooping and laying one hand upon his wavy hair, where it so often had lovingly rested, she

pressed a kissed upon his brow, saying tearfully, "God bless you, Earl, God bless you now and forever."

Passing his arm around her waist, he drew her to his breast, crying brokenly—

"Darling! darling! O, my beloved, must I give you up? This is far worse than death. Darling! darling, remember always that I have loved you; do love you far, far better than life!"

Then he released her and she passed from the room, her face all wet with his agonizing tears.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"OUR ONLY HOPE IS TO FORGET."

"And oh! I feel in that was given,
A blessing never meant for me;
Thou wert too like a dream of Heaven
For earthly love to merit thee."

When Edna returned home after parting from Earl, she passed silently to her room, and after changing her street dress for a cool muslin, she went to her bureau, and took therefrom Archie's Bible.

Commonly she did not use the one which had been her brother's dying gift; but the very sacredness with which she always regarded it, seemed to make the occasional use of it like an entering into the holy place, where she communed with her brother's God.

Turning hastily to the sixth chapter of second Corinthians, she read—"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? or what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" These words, which a few months before had seemed almost cruel in the command which they laid upon her, now seemed to smile back a blessing. When she first learned that Earl was acquiring intemperate hab-

its, her love at that time was so strong, that she would have married him, notwithstanding she abhorred his grievous fault. But the words, "Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers" seemed so plainly a command of the Most High, that she faltered in her purpose; loth to give Earl up or to prove disloyal to the Word of God. So she strove tearfully and prayerfully to lead him upward, but to no avail; he only sank deeper and deeper, and she was by nature too high-souled and pure-minded to be able to continue to bestow her love upon one whose character she could neither admire nor respect; and her love died the natural death of love bestowed upon an unworthy object.

Sad indeed would have been her fate if the marriage vows had already been spoken. Now she poured out thanksgiving to God, that his Word had kept her from becoming a drunkard's wife.

Edna had so long been oppressed by the thought of being obliged to give Earl up, that now, since the renunciation was complete, her heart beat more lightly than it had done for many months. The only feeling of sadness that she experienced was caused by her sympathy for Earl. He would always be a very, very dear friend; and she would ever cherish the memory of him as he had been ere he took the downward path; thinking of him tearfully, fondly, even as we think of the dead.

Who can explore the depths of a woman's heart? How often we see some woman clinging fondly to

her degraded husband, when we know that she can neither honor, revere nor love him.

In early years he touched the fountain of tenderness which dwells in the heart of every true woman; and its springs can never quite dry up, although he may sink so low as to become an object of scorn to all the world beside.

Presently Flossie came slowly into the room. She felt very sure that Edna must be overwhelmed with grief, and she wished to comfort her, but felt quite at a loss to know how to proceed.

Edna knew Flossie's errand by the expression of her face, so putting an arm caressingly about her, Edna said,—"Then you have heard, dear, that I have broken my engagement with Earl?"

"Yes," said Flossie in an awe-struck tone. "And—and—Violet you are not—heart-broken?"

A smile flitted across Edna's face as she replied, "No, I believe not. I am aware the poet asserts that 'The heart may break, yet brokenly live on," but I think my heart is throbbing too healthfully for a broken one. But seriously, dear, I am sad, not on my own account, however, but only for Earl. As for myself, I feel a peacefulness and nearness to God such as I have not experienced before for many a weary day."

Flossie broke out passionately—"Well, I think it was just horrid mean of Earl to act so, I—"

Edna put up her hand with an imploring gesture, "Don't, Flossie," she said; Earl was weak,

only weak. Thousands go down beneath this curse every year. Believing themselves strong, they trust in their strength and fail."

"Then you were not angry with Earl when you renounced him?" Flossie wonderingly inquired.

"No, indeed."

"Well I don't see how you could give him up then. I never could give up one I loved, that way, unless I got real mad at him; then I would give him back his heart with a vengeance, and probably cry my eyes out afterward. But I never intend to fall in love," she continued. "If any one ever should be silly enough to fall in love with me, I shall compliment him upon his good taste, and politely inform him that Flossie Evert irrevocably made up her mind many years before, to steer clear of love and lovers.

"Oh, I am speaking the truth," she said, as Edna smiled derisively. There are too many shoals and quicksands in matrimonial waters for me. I never undertook to conduct but one love affair, and you and Earl have made sad shipwreck of that. So I wash my hands of the whole matter henceforth and forever."

"Ah, but love will come some day, my darling," said Edna. "Love will come and you will make room in your tender little heart for her and will cherish her. Some day I hope to see you the queen of a happy household."

"No," said Flossie, resolutely, "I shall never

marry. We will just be two little old maids together."

Then as a sudden thought struck her, she looked searchingly into Edna's eyes, saying: "You don't love—any one else do you, Violet?"

Edna knew to whom Flossie's "any one else" referred, and an additional color crept into her cheeks as she replied—

"No, not as you mean. You are dearer to me now, Flossie, than any one in all the world besides."

Flossie embraced Edna, saying—"You dear, sweet creature! If we don't float down the stream of Time, two blissfully happy old maids, then my name isn't Flossie Evert."

A few days later Bertie Ross came in answer to Ivy's appeal.

Earl was pleased with the prospect of having Ross for a traveling companion, and was anxious to be off, hoping that new scenes would restore his peace of mind.

Flossie went almost daily to see Earl. She hardly knew whether she was most sorry for, or angry at him; and she petted and scolded him by turns, until the poor fellow was quite bewildered.

He refused his uncle's invitation to visit at Evert Place, and on the morning of his departure, Mrs. Evert, Flossie, and the doctor went to see him off and to bring Ivy home with them.

Edna deemed it best that she and Earl should

not meet; so she wrote him a kind, friendly letter and sent it to him by Flossie.

After reading it he folded it up tenderly, saying sadly to himself, "The last."

When Flossie returned she gave Edna a letter which Earl had written before leaving. It ran as follows:

"Dear Edna:—I cannot leave this scene of past joys and present humiliation without writing you a few words of farewell. Once I believed there would be no farewells spoken between us until the final farewell when death separated us; but I have since learned the truth which the poet voices—

"' There are words of deeper sorrow Than the wail above the dead."

"And so the words must be spoken; and with a heart aching with the burden of its love for you, I say, Farewell, oh best beloved. God grant to you the peace and joy which I can never know. And may all the wishes of your pure heart be realized.

"It seems to me now like the sheerest folly that I should ever have imagined that I might win you. But for all that you have been to me in the past, I thank you. Your name will ever represent to me all that is loveliest and best; and by my knowledge of you, I will think the more highly of womanly purity and nobleness. I yearn to see your face once more, to hear your voice; but I

know that my presence would only cause you fresh sorrow, therefore I refused my uncle's invitation to his house. I have already caused you so many tears that I am burdened with the memory of them. Never forget that I have and do love you, purely and sincerely; and my love is as lasting as my life. I ask nothing of Omnipotence for myself, and am ready now for anything which a malignant fate may decree against me; but I earnestly pray that God will open his great storehouse of blessings for you, and that His holy angels may have charge over you, to lead you in paths of perfect peace.

"And now there is one thing more to be said, which almost breaks my heart to say it; but knowing that peace and happiness can come to you only by forgetfulness of me, and remembering all the tears and heart-aches that I have caused you in the past, I say, forget graceless, repentant Earl."

Edna dropped many pearly tears upon Earl's letter; then she folded it up and laid it away with Archie's Bible and other mementos of her belov-

ed dead. As she did so she said sadly, "The last." Ah! little did either think how their paths

would cross again.

The month that followed was a peaceful, uneventful one to the inmates of Evert Place.

Each morning Edna and Flossie arose with the

sun, and took long, delightful rides upon their white horses, coming back for breakfast with happy faces and healthful appetites.

Mr. Thoresby, their new minister, was rapidly growing in favor, though he could never be beloved as Homer was—whose loving heart and pure life they had known and admired from his babyhood up—yet he was so kindly and wise that they began to love and honor him accordingly.

One day when Edna and Flossie called upon Mrs. Thoresby, they found her looking so much rosier than when she came among them, that they could not refrain from commenting upon the fact.

"O, yes," Mrs. Thoresby said, brightly, "my husband and I are quite well now; and we feel that we cannot sufficiently thank the dear friend who so kindly made the exchange with us. We shall go back to our labors there with renewed health and zeal. I say our, for of course I help my husband; there is so much that a woman can do to help on the work in a place like New Orleans."

"You must be very happy," said Edna warmly.
"I have always deemed the life of a minister of the gospel the happiest upon earth; then surely the being that comes next in the scale of happiness must be the minister's wife, for she—" Then meeting the laughing, quizzical glance of Flossie's dark eyes, Edna stopped, blushing and confused.

Seeing Edna's confusion, Flossie's eyes danced

with mirth and a smile rippled over her lips and dimpled mischievously in her rosy cheeks.

After they had returned home Edna was sitting in her room doing some needle work; Flossie had been busy in the studio for some time, but at last she came slowly into the room, carrying in her hand the drawing she had made of Homer and Edna the day of the pic-nic.

"Violet," she said, with an apologetic air, "could you not take care of this picture? It annoys me greatly, for I am always afraid some one will see it, and that would be unkind both to you and Homer."

Her manner did not deceive Edna at all, and she looked up with a smile, while a soft blush tinged her fair cheeks, as she replied,—

"Yes, I suppose so; I do not wish you to be annoyed by anything which concerns me. But, Flossie, I think I heard you say some time ago that you had washed your hands of love and love affairs, now and forever. Look to it, my dear, that you do not have to wash them over again."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A LETTER, "MADE OF THE MOST CONVINCING FLOWERS."

"An exquisite invention this,
Worthy of Love's most honeyed kiss;
This art of writing billet-doux
In buds, and odors, and bright hues;
In saying all one feels and thinks,
In clever daffodils and pinks;
Uttering as well as silence may,
The sweetest words, the sweetest way,
And growing ones own words and fancies,
In orange tubs and beds of pansies."

Shortly after receiving the first edition of her work, Edna went upon a short visit to Taylorville. She took with her a volume of the poems and when she presented it to her mother, Mrs. Slater smiled joyously, and hastily turned the pages as if impatient to know the contents.

Then the old, troubled look swept across her face, and tears gathered in her eyes and slowly trickled down her cheeks.

Edna noticed the change that had come over her mother's face, and putting out her hand with a caressing gesture, said softly—

"What is it, Mother?"

Mrs. Slater hastily wiped away her tears, saying sadly—

"It is unkind of me to cloud your joy; but I

never see you successful or triumphant in anything, or see you do a worthy action, that Remorse does not point his finger at me and say—'What heights of eminence might not your other child have reached, if you had cared for him and cherished him? Does not his death sit heavy on your soul?' God grant that you, my child, may never know the fiend, Remorse."

Edna sat quite silent for a moment, looking out of the window through a mist of tears; finally she said,—

"At least you do not shift the blame from your own shoulders by saying—'God took him.' I have known persons who would say that God took him to convert you."

"No," said Mrs. Slater, "I realize too well that his life was lost through my neglect. But I am aware that there are persons who think that God sometimes sends death to one person to convert another. Forgetting that we are mortal and subject to the laws which govern mortality, they regard death as a messenger from God, rather than a consequence that follows the failure to carefully comply with the laws of health."

"That reminds me," said Edna, "of a circumstance which occurred a few years ago. Dr. Evert had a friend living in the city, a man of some local prominence, who after a short illness died; and I remember hearing Dr. Evert refer to the matter regretfully, saying, 'that his friend came

to his death by the transgression of some plainly written law of health.' A few days later, while reading a city paper, I was very much surprised to see that some of the man's friends had passed what they were pleased to term 'resolutions of respect,' which began by saying, 'Whereas, It has pleased God to call from our midst our worthy and esteemed fellow-laborer,' and it went on in the usual style. I was somewhat puzzled, and called Dr. Evert's attention to the matter, and he said rather indignantly that their 'resolutions of respect' were not very respectful to God, whatever they might be toward the man.

"Dr. Evert very early taught me that if I carefully regarded the laws of health, I might expect to live to a good old age, unless I fell a victim to some contagious disease, and in that case, my life would depend upon the ability of my constitution to withstand the disease; rather than whether God would perform a miracle and save my life by tearing down the laws of nature which he himself has established."

Mrs. Slater said sadly—"I cannot understand why so many people regard God as the dispenser of sickness and death. When our Saviour was upon earth he said repeatedly that he came to do his Father's will; and the apostle says, 'In him was the fullness of the God-head bodily;' yet he went about healing the sick and raising the dead; evidently God had not sent sickness and death to

those persons, for the Son would not have undone the work of his Father. And when Lazarus was laid in the tomb, Jesus stood beside that humble grave and wept with Mary and Martha, even when he knew that in another moment he would break the bands of death and restore their beloved brother to their arms. Yet He, who was as divine as his Father, whose name is Love, He stood beside that lowly grave and wept at the sorrow which death had caused."

Tears were glittering upon Edna's lashes as she said,—"For that manifestation of love and sympathy I shall adore Him forever; He is, indeed, my Lord and my God."

Then she added, "I do not wonder that many persons fear God rather than love him; for they regard him as an all-powerful being who keeps watch over them, and if he sees that their heart clings fondly to some one of earth, he removes the object of their affection that they may think only of him. What a perversion of Holy Writ! Why, the whole Bible is one doctrine of love. 'Husbands, love your wives,' 'Little children, love one another.' And it teaches that we should so love our friends that we would be willing to lay down our lives for them.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, with flushed cheeks and shining eyes, "the God I worship—the God—not of theology, but of the Bible—is a God of love, who watches over my wayward, faltering steps

with infinite tenderness, while he guides me with patient, loving hand toward a home of joy and peace. And when death kisses my loved ones to sleep, God takes them lovingly to his breast, saying to me, 'Peace! my child, peace! be still. I know thy sorrow, I know thy tears, but you shall meet again. In my presence is fullness of joy, and at my right hand are pleasures forevermore.' Oh, to serve such a God as that is joy in the present life and eternal bliss in the world to come!"

* * * * * * *

A few days after Edna's return to Evert Place, she might have been seen one afternoon sitting out in the summer house; a book lay beside her, but it was unopened, for her mind was wandering off upon the wings of fancy.

Presently, taking a pencil and paper, she began to write, pausing ever and anon to gaze into vacancy, and then again resume her writing with a look of rapture that would have told an interested observer that her thoughts were traversing that sacred realm where only the minds of poets wander.

Unconsciously she formed a pleasing picture, as she sat thus occupied in the green bower, surrounded by swaying branches of honeysuckle, trumpet flowers, and Virginia creepers.

At least so thought Esther Russell, who, having

come in company with her mother to call at Evert Place, and being told that Edna was out upon the lawn, had gone in search of her.

Finding her thus employed, Esther paused a moment, debating in her mind whether or not she should make her presence known.

The question was speedily settled, however, for little Homer had toddled out after his mother, and he broke the stillness with his childish prattle, and Edna, hearing his voice, looked up—saw her friend, and the rapt look speedily gave place to one of delight and glad welcome.

Esther was spending the summer in the home of her girlhood, and she and Edna met quite often now, but the occasion was not the less pleasant on that account.

After the greetings were over, and Edna had given her friend a seat in the cool retreat, where the balmy air which fanned their cheeks came to them perfumed with the odor of mignonette and sweet alyssum, Esther said,—

"This is indeed a pleasant spot in which to spend a summer afternoon, but you appeared so radiantly happy that it seemed a pity to recall your mind to things of earth."

Then Edna smilingly replied that the pleasure of meeting her friend excelled the joy she experienced in her "flights of fancy;" and so they talked gayly on unregarding the flight of time. Little Homer, with the sweet confidence of childhood,

came readily to Edna's arms and she held him in a loving embrace, and listened with delight to his childish prattle. Looking at him with laughing eyes, she said,—

"Oh, it is so long since I dwelt in the valley of childhood, I have forgotten the language."

"'Is it warm in that green valley,
Vale of childhood, where you dwell?
Is it calm in that green valley,
Round whose bournes such great hills swell?
When, like shooting stars, the angels
To your couch at night-fall go,
Are their swift wings heard to rustle?
Tell me! for you know.''

Then as she pushed back the clustering curls from the broad, white baby brow, and observed the wise sweetness of the dimpled mouth and great brown eyes, her thoughts flew to Homer the elder, and she remarked upon the strong resemblance between the two.

"Yes," said Esther, "mother often says that he is the exact likeness of my brother in his babyhood." And then she added softly, "If he will but resemble his uncle in mind and heart, my fondest wishes will be realized."

"I think that you are justly proud of your brother," Edna said, "and I believe you will have reason to be proud of your son."

Esther said, "We received a letter from my brother to-day, and I fear from the tone of it that

he is growing home-sick; there was a vein of sadness running through his letter which is something quite unusual. He stated that there is much sickness in New Orleans at present; and mother is nervously anxious lest yellow fever should reach there. We hear that there have been several cases of it in the south."

"You do not believe Homer is in danger?"

"No," Esther replied, "I think he would have told us if the disease had spread to New Orleans. I am not willing to borrow trouble; and I believe that he has the blues, and in that case I feel convinced that I can prescribe a remedy."

Then as Edna looked up inquiringly, Esther added, "I would prescribe a volume of your poems."

"Do you really believe he would care for them?"

Edna blushingly inquired.

Esther smilingly replied, "I believe he would prize them beyond anything else, unless it were the gift of the—well I won't. I was going to add something about the gift of the hand which wrote those poems, but I will be merciful and spare your blushes."

In the seclusion of her room that evening, Edna opened a volume of her poems, and after hesitating a moment, placed a tiny bouquet (which was composed of pansies, heliotropes and blue-eyed forget-me-nots) upon a verse with the evident intention of marking it.

Slyly, and with a look of tender shame, she pressed a kiss upon the flowers, then closed the book and prepared it for the mail; and as her hand traced the name, love's birthday blush crept softly over cheek and brow.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE STORY OF THE FLOWERS TOLD.

"Know'st thou the land where the lemon trees bloom,
Where the gold orange glows in the deep thicket's gloom,
Where the wind ever soft, from the blue heaven blows,
And the groves are of laurel, and myrtle and rose?"

When Homer first went to New Orleans, he was almost bewildered by the change of pastorate from a rural community to that of a mission church in this old city teeming with foreigners, priest-craft and superstition. Only a few faithful ones stood by him, while in the stainlessness of his young manhood, he stood up and pleaded eloquently with the people to cast aside all creeds, and take only the Word of God to teach them how to live and die.

But few even paused to heed him, they cared not for God, much less to know his will.

Sin and shame and misery abounded; and Homer's heart yearned to lead them to a better life.

Day after day he plodded from one grim tenement to another; often entering homes wretched and grimy with neglect, hoping to be permitted to speak the words of Life to the coarse, dull inmates.

Having been reared in a pure and blameless home, and accustomed to all of the refinements of life, his soul shrank back abhorred from the filth that met his eyes, and the profane language that stirred the air.

Yet still he labored on, and learned to kneel by dying beds in these abject abodes; and with pitiful, unshrinking fingers wiped the death dew from the brows of those who would not heed the message of love which he bore.

Yet most of all, his heart was pitifully stirred for the children whom he saw growing up amidst poverty, intemperance and vice. So he hired a teacher and established a private school, and he sought out the little ones, and brought them where they might learn things befitting their tender years. And as he saw them acquiring cleanly habits, and heard them in childish accents lisping the sacred words which he diligently taught them, his heart exulted with hope.

The picture was not all dark; by patient labor and with loving zeal he was able to bring some souls to the Master to receive forgiveness of sins, and begin life anew with their faces set Zionward. Here also, his eyes which were wont to rejoice in the beauties of nature, found much to admire in the tropical luxuriance of this sunny land.

He made the acquaintance of some people of wealth and refinement, who gladly welcomed him to their beautiful homes; but his charge was a mission church among the poorer class of people, and here he diligently labored; and in their humble abodes found many a woe which his willing hands could alleviate, many a burden that he might share.

But often he grew home-sick, heart and brain alike weary, and then the letters which he received from home were indeed like gleans of sunshine to him.

His mother wrote him long, loving letters, full of faith in God and loving pride in her son, who had consecrated his life to the Master's service.

Esther's letters were no less tender, but more newsy. It was through her that he learned with deep sorrow, that Earl Whitney had been wounded in a saloon. A few weeks later she wrote that the engagement between Edna and Earl was broken, and that Earl had gone away.

As she met Edna quite often, Esther was able to tell her brother much that deeply interested him, and she often went into detail, telling him how Edna looked upon this or that occasion when they met; how she was dressed, and what she said if the conversation in any way referred to him.

"Edna was free!" Often he told himself this, as if there were comfort in the repetition of the words. And he longed to plead his cause at the forum of her heart; but feared to trust a cause so important to the cold medium of pen and paper; and so he tried to school his heart to patience until his return home. He had waited for years; he well might wait a little longer, he told himself.

Then as time went on and he heard of the success attending her literary efforts, he wrote her a letter of congratulation, in which he did not attempt to veil his undying love for her; but he did not reveal that he hoped some day to win a return of her affection.

To this letter he received no reply. Though he did not know it, it was many days before his letter was read by Edna, she being absent on a visit at the time of its arrival; and the letter was not forwarded to her, because she was daily expected to return.

As no reply was vouchsafed him, he grew despondent, and felt more hopeless than he had ever been in all those years of patient waiting.

The summer was intensely hot; sickness and death abounded, and sorrow seemed to meet him on every hand.

At last yellow fever swept over the city. Thousands at its dread approach fled for their lives, careless of the sick and dying. Others, terror-stricken, shut themselves up in their homes, living in mortal fear of the disease, and by their mental excitement, prepared themselves to become its earliest victims.

It was almost impossible to find nurses for the sick, and daily the death list swelled to greater proportions.

With a few other brave souls, Homer went among the sufferers, cared for the sick, and closed dying eyes. Day and night he kept weary vigils. Thoughtless of his own comfort, he was unwilling to leave while he could be of service.

At last, about a week after the outbreak of the epidemic he was taken ill and obliged to go to his hotel. He found several letters awaiting him, and also a package, evidently a book.

He could not think of reading all the letters, his suffering was too great, but there was one addressed in his mother's familiar writing, and this he could not let go unread.

Sighing for the touch of the gentle hand that had ministered to him in childhood and youth, he broke the seal of his mother's letter and read the loving missive. Read it slowly, painfully, on account of the blinding pain in his head. When he had finished its perusal he pressed it to his lips saying softly—

"Dear, dear Mother! perhaps your boy may never see you again—never in this world."

A moment later his eye rested upon the package lying upon the table. He unwrapped it and discovered a volume of poems in blue and gold, and his heart throbbed wildly, and a mist swam before his eyes as he read the beloved name of the author, "Edna Carlisle."

All unconscious of pain or weariness now, he read poem after poem with trembling eagerness, until at last he came to the one which Edna had marked with the flowers.

Removing them and reading their silent message,

his face grew radiant with joyous wonderment. And so this was the answer to his letter, the assurance that her thoughts turned to him, with a plea for like remembrance. It was a reply so modest, and so delicately conveyed, and withal so characteristic of Edna, that his eyes grew tender with reverent love and adoration. Then he turned to the lines which were stained by the purple blood of the pansy and read:

'Who can tell when love will come or go?

Little Cupid with his tiny bow,
Asks not the victim, 'Wilt thou have it so?'
An absent form sometimes grows strangely dear,
Whose love was not returned when suing near,
Who perchance was seen depart without one pitying tear.'

Homer's eyes sparkled with hope as he read the lines. His heart leapt joyously, propelling the ruddy blood to his cheeks, and all unconscious of physical pain, he arose and paced back and forth across the room.

Then going to his escritoir he wrote hastily for a few minutes; but overtaxed nature could endure no more. There came a ringing in his ears, a darkness as of death swept over his eyes, and he fell heavily to the floor.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"DOWN! THOU CLIMBING SORROW."

"All that's bright must fade-The brightest still the fleetest; All that's sweet was made. But to be lost when sweetest."

As the rising sun, heralded by clouds of purple and crimson and gold, lights up Evert Place, a beautiful picture is presented to view, of dew covered flowers, shedding on the air their fragrant breath, and vines and trees bending beneath their weight of luscious fruit.

A beautiful picture, but Edna, who was wont to rejoice in nature's beauty, looks on all that panorama of crimson and purple and gold, with eyes which see not what they rest upon.

Restlessly she paces the long veranda, pausing ever and anon to gather a cluster of scarlet creepers, nervously tear them to pieces and cast them from her.

An hour later, Flossie, dressed in pink, her golden curls floating over her shoulders and her dark eyes beaming with gayety, flutters out on the porch like some brilliant, glancing humming bird.

Throwing her arm around Edna's waist, Flossie says laughingly,

"Have you never heard that 'the early bird catches the worm?' O you poor little mite of a worm, aren't you afraid that naughty early bird will catch you?"

Then, as she observed that her words seemed to

fall on unheeding ears, she exclaimed-

"Are you ill, Violet? Your cheeks are as white as your dress."

"No," Edna absently replied.

Looking searchingly at her, Flossie said, "I am sorry that mamma and I have promised to accompany Ivy home to-day; I fear you are going to be ill. If you are not well, we will not leave you, dear."

Edna roused herself and replied—"I am feeling quite well."

"Violet, I wish you would revoke your decision to visit your mother, and would go with us to Chicago. We are to be gone only two weeks, you know."

"No, I can not go to Chicago," Edna said with a far away look in her eyes.

Presently the morning meal was announced, and the family gathered around the breakfast table.

An unusual silence prevailed, Flossie and Ivy doing the most of the talking. Edna spoke no word and only made a pretence of eating.

At last the doctor, who had been gravely silent, looked up and, addressing his wife said—

"Nellie, I can no longer disregard this plea for

help. I must go to New Orleans. The papers state that the death list is daily increasing, and it is terrible to me to think of the suffering of the sick, many of whom die, only for the want of medical aid and proper nursing.

"Do not think of going, Papa," Flossie exclaimed; "it would kill me to see you start."

Mrs. Evert did not reply for a moment, finally speaking in a low tone which she vainly strove to render steady, she said:—"If you deem it your duty to go, I will not hinder you, Wilfred. I only stipulate that you allow me to accompany you."

"My wife!" he said in tremulous tones, "do you think I would allow you to expose yourself to such danger? No, if that is the only terms upon which I can go, I must give it up."

Turning to him, Edna said, "I have been revolving this subject in my mind for several hours. I wish to go to nurse the sick, but delayed mentioning it because I feared that you would not consent to my going."

"I would indeed refuse my consent," Dr. Evert gravely replied.

"Do not forbid my going, I beg you," she earnestly pleaded; "for I must, indeed I must go."

"Edna," he said, "when you were adopted into my family, I vowed to so conduct myself that when I met your father in the 'better land,' I could say to him, 'I have been as a father to your child;' and I hope I have not failed." "You have been as a kind and loving father to me," she interposed.

"Then give me the due obedience of a child. I refuse my consent to your going,—now let the matter rest, we will speak no more upon this painful subject."

That morning Mrs. Evert, Ivy and Flossie left for Chicago, and Edna was to leave on the evening train for a short visit at her mother's. During the afternoon, Edna called to learn if there was any improvement in the health of Mrs. Atwood, who for several days had been very ill of a fever.

Esther came into the drawing-room in response to the card which Edna had sent up.

"Is your mother worse?" Edna inquired as she noticed Esther's tearful eyes and troubled countenance.

"Yes," she replied, "mother gradually grows worse. This morning I sent a telegram to Homer, and received a reply from a New Orleans physician stating that Homer had succumbed to yellow fever.

Her tears started forth afresh. "O Edna, it is breaking my heart to think of my brother, my only brother, lying sick away from home, with perhaps no one to care for him; perchance dying with no loving hand to wipe the death dew from his brow."

Edna arose, calm and pale, her sorrow was too deep for words or tears.

"I shall go to him," she said, and started to leave the room.

"What do you mean, Edna?" Esther exclaimed.

"I shall go to Homer on the next train," Edna replied, and without another word left the house.

On reaching home, with that pale calmness which is born only of deep sorrow, she went to her room, and taking from its hiding place the drawing which Flossie had made the day of the pic-nic, Edna held it out before her, gazing long at Homer's pictured face.

"O my love! my love!" her pale lips murmured. I scorn myself that I could ever have been so unkind to you. Fool that I was who did not know my own heart! Fool and blind! to think to wed a common man, when I might have married you—a prince of the house Royal—a child of the King of kings! Oh, beautiful eyes! I know so much of you! And perhaps even now the fever has quenched the living light which played in them, and they may never beam on me, speaking forgiveness!"

She sank to the floor in the very abandonment of woe, and tearless sobs shook her from head to foot.

Presently there came a knock at the door, and one of the servants called:—

"Miss Edna, the doctor wishes to see you in the library!"

Calming herself as best she could, she obeyed the summons.

"Edna," said Dr. Evert, as she entered the room, "I have sad intelligence. A telegram has come bearing the information that Homer is ill."

"Uncle Wilfred," she broke in passionately, "you will consent now to my going, will you not?"

"Why so?" he inquired in surprise.

Her face, which was averted from him, was deathly pale, and he realized from the tones of her voice that she was laboring under deep emotion.

"Why should you insist upon going because he is ill?"

"Because he will need my care. Because—oh Uncle can't you see—must I tell you that—that—" then she broke off suddenly. "Do not forbid my going, for I must go to him."

Dr. Evert began to understand and he said—"Why, I thought it was Earl—" then he paused undecided how to complete the sentence which he had begun in such haste.

Edna broke in passionately, "I know what you would say. You thought it was Earl I loved, and now you think me fickle. But hear my defence ere you blame me."

She paused a moment, then went on in a voice which was trembling with emotion—

"Earl won my girlish love. If he had been as noble as my fancy painted him, my love would

have been as unchanging as the eternal love of God. But there were chords in my heart which he never touched; depths he could not fathom; a want which his nature could not supply. Then as time went on, he pursued a course which made me realize more deeply that we were divided in the most important things of life; besides, he lacked the strong will and strength of purpose, which in my eyes constitute the first essential of true manliness. But you know the result; his course was such that you, his uncle, advised me to break my engagement with him, saying that you plainly saw that there was a life of misery in store for us both if we married. We realized this also, and so we parted; for I had grown weary of always looking down and had ceased to love a man whose character I could not respect. She paused a moment, then with averted face continued,-

"Through all these years Homer has loved me with a patient devotion which surely merits some return, and I have long realized that he represents my ideal of true nobility. A few days ago I received a letter from him which stirred my heart to its depths, and awoke a response such as Earl never possessed the power to call forth."

Then raising her eyes appealingly to Dr. Evert, she said piteously,—"Uncle Wilfred, if you do indeed wish to be as a father to me, you will consent to my going, for if Homer should die alone

among strangers, I can never know happiness again."

"I will no longer forbid your going," Dr. Evert gravely replied, "but if you will go, I will accompany you; I can not let you go alone."

"O no!" she said, "you must not go, you

might also be taken ill."

"I apprehend no danger for myself," he replied.
"We physicians escape many diseases on account of our fearlessness; and yellow fever is a disease of which this is especially true, as all emotions tend to increase the liability to incur it."

"Besides," he added in a low tone, "I go to endeavor to save a life dear to God."

Edna sank into a chair, and tears of relief flowed down her cheeks.

Dr. Evert gently stroked her bowed head, saying tenderly,—

"Poor child! poor child! Your heart has been rudely torn by love's tempestuous tossings. God grant that it may enter into a settled port at last."

Then he started, and exclaimed, "I had forgotten! I brought a letter for you."

"I have no thought for letters now," she said, with a gesture of weariness.

"But this may interest you; I observed that it was post-marked New Orleans."

She reached her hand out eagerly for the letter. Opening it, she found apparently two letters in different hand writings.

Selecting first that which corresponded with the writing on the envelope, she read as follows:

"MISS EDNA CARLISLE:—Having been called in to render medical aid to Mr. Atwood, I find him painfully anxious lest a letter which he had been writing to you at the time he fell ill should not reach you.

"At his earnest request I stop in my busy round of duties to write this explanation and address this letter to you, believing that by relieving my patient's mind I shall thus render him the best aid in my power. Respectfully,

"J. F. RANDALL, M. D."

With pallid face and trembling hands, Edna took up the enclosed letter and read:

"OH, PEERLESS LOVE: I read your message, and it was like the trumpet call of joy to my soul. It found me sick unto death; I know not if I have pain now; I can think only of you. I always believed God meant us to love each other, our minds and souls so well accord; it seemed that He meant you for my true Eve, and I never gave up the hope that sometime your heart would turn to me. I ever kept my heart virgined for you. Am I presuming too much upon your modest reply? Ah, sweetheart, do I not understand your gentle nature

too well to believe that you would have sent me those flowers, unless your heart was indeed mine; and you meant to bid me hope! And yet, oh, my beloved! it may be this knowledge has come to me as a crowning blessing, ere I sink into a lonely grave in a distant land, far from kindred ties. Already the dread disease, which has spread the pall of death over this city, is creeping in my veins and setting my brain on fire. I have seen so many die from its dread ravages that I scarcely dare hope to live; yet, my beloved, I shall die happy; the king of terrors can not rob me of the joy which the assurance of your love has brought me,-but oh, I yearn for a sight of your face. Alas! that desire is not likely to be granted me in this world; but I fancy I see you living on to a good old age; a sweet, silver-haired saint, crowned with years and good deeds; while I, who passed away in the prime of my young manhood, wait at the Heavenly gate to welcome you there-my bride that was to be! My dear, and only love, I never received a kiss from your dear lips; a darkness obscures my vision; a terrible pain is shooting through my brain. Oh! if you could but press one kiss upon my brow, I would say to the angels,—'The purest saint that ever lived kissed me there.' But I am talking wildly. My Eve! My God-given Eve, your love has robbed death of its"

The letter came to a stop here. A blot marred

the paper, and Edna knew that just then the pen had fallen from the nerveless hand.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"DARK LOWERS OUR FATE."

"Clasp me a little longer, on the brink
Of fate! while I can feel thy dear caress;
And when this heart has ceased to beat, oh! think—
And let it mitigate thy woes' excess—
That thou hast been all tenderness,
And friend, to more than human friendship just,
Oh! by that retrospect of happiness,
And by the hopes of an immortal trust,
God shall assuage thy pangs when I am laid in dust."

Dr. Evert stood attentively regarding Edna while she read Homer's letter. He saw the color coming and going fitfully in her cheeks; then as she reached the end her face paled to a deathly whiteness, and she arose, saying in low, excited tones,—

"Oh! I must go to him. If he be still living I will do battle with the death angel for his dear life; and if he be dead, then I will"—her voice died away in a tearless sob and she sank back upon the chair, and covered her face with her hands.

Dr. Evert stroked her hair with a gesture which was almost womanly in its pitying tenderness.

"Edna," he said firmly, "you really must control your feelings. If you should go into the fever district with your mind and nerves in this excited state, you would surely fall a victim and would perhaps lose your own life, without being able to help Homer.

"The train we must take leaves here at four in the morning. I shall go to town now to get one of the city physicians to take charge of my patients in my absence; fortunately there is little sickness in the neighborhood at present. Mrs. Atwood is the only case of any serious character, and I apprehend no danger for her. While I am gone you must calm your nerves; take some nourishment; and see that your trunk is packed, for it may be necessary that we stay several weeks."

"You know I intended to go to mother's this evening; and the dresses I had selected to wear there, being plain, will be suitable for a trip like this."

"Well, I am off now," said Dr. Evert; "I think I shall return before nine. Meanwhile you must try to take some rest, for we have a very tiresome journey before us."

"Uncle," she pleaded, as he was leaving the room, "please let me have a medical work to read

which treats of yellow fever."

He paused a moment, irresolute.

"I am afraid it will only tend to increase your nervousness," he said.

"No," she replied, "it will not; it will give me confidence by instructing me how to care for him. You have always said I had a natural talent for nursing the sick; and I must know all the symp-

toms of this disease and method of treatment if I am to be of any service."

He brought her a large volume, and after a few more words left for the city. When he returned a couple of hours later he found her still studiously poring over the book. She was so absorbed that she took no notice of his entrance.

"Edna, have you eaten nothing since I left?" he sternly inquired. She shook her head, and continued reading.

Dr. Evert went to her, closed the book and put it on the shelf in a more authoritative manner than he had ever evinced toward her before; then turning to her, he said,—

"If you will not eat, go to bed and sleep."

"I am sure that I can not sleep," she wearily replied.

"And I am sure that you shall sleep," he answered. So preparing a quieting draught he made her drink it.

The opiate did its work and she slept heavily until in the gray dawn of the morning a servant aroused her to prepare for the journey; and when she entered the breakfast-room, Dr. Evert observed with pleasure that although her cheeks were still pale, yet she was perfectly calm, and her nerves were as steady as his own. Immediately after breakfast they entered the carriage, and were driven to the depot.

As the train, after receiving its passengers, with

shriek of whistle and clanging of bell sped onward again, Edna's eyes eagerly sought out the grand old stone house, with its towering, ivied walls, where Homer was born, and where his blameless youth had been spent. Would he ever walk those ancestral halls again? she wondered. A mist swam before her eyes, and she bowed her head upon her hand and wept silently.

On and on they sped; making close connection, they paused not to rest either day or night.

Upon the second day of their journey, at about eleven o'clock they reached New Orleans.

The city seemed so silent, so deserted, that involuntarily they shivered as if a blast from a charnel house had swept upon them.

Just as they reached the hotel, they met Dr. Randall, who informed them that he had just left Homer's room, and that he was getting along as well as could be expected.

Dr. Evert secured a room for Edna and left her there, bidding her make her toilet, while he went to prepare Homer for her visit.

She hastily removed all traces of the dust of travel, brushed out her jetty tresses, and changed her traveling dress for a soft, silver gray, which would make no rustling in the sick room.

Presently the doctor returned and said, in reply to her look of eager inquiry,—

"Yes, he is doing very well, and it was almost

pitiful to witness his joy when he learned that you were here."

The doctor looked at her wonderingly, surprised at her unusual loveliness.

Excitement had lent a dazzling brilliancy to her eyes, and a color to her cheeks that struck him, although he had been accustomed to look upon her beauty daily.

Before conducting her to Homer, Dr. Evert

paused to say, warningly,-

"Be not too sanguine of his recovery. Though he appears to be doing well, yet there is still much to fear, for he is at present in the second stage of the disease, which is the most comfortable; the worst is yet to come."

When Edna entered the room where Homer lay, he half arose from his pillow, quite unconscious of physical pain and weakness.

He only knew that the girl he loved was coming to him with soft, noiseless step; her graceful head was thrown slightly backward, a rosy bloom flushed her cheeks, her red lips were parted in a loving smile, and her dark blue eyes shone like stars.

Then kneeling beside the bed, she pressed to her lips the hand extended to her, and tears of love and joy and sorrow welled to her eyes and trembled on her long black lashes.

"My love! my peerless love!" Homer murmured in trembling, joyous tones; "raise your sweet eyes to mine, that I may learn if this be a a dream or a blissful reality."

Then, as she raised her face, and he saw that upon her cheeks there came and went most human blushes, he exclaimed,—

"No! thank God, this is not a dream. But I did dream of you, my love; only an hour ago I fell asleep, and dreamt that I entered an enchanted land where the soft green grass was starred with fragrant blossoms. A low, sweet music stirred the balmy air which played upon my cheek, and while I wondered if I had reached the Glorified Land, I saw you coming toward me all in white, with orange blossoms in your hair and in your hands. Then a little cloud over and behind you caught my eye-a radiant cloud of crimson and gold and violet, that lay in beams of tremulous woven light. Then your brother's face appeared therein, and seemed to smile upon us. And while I bowed my head in joyous wonderment, you pressed a kiss upon my brow: and I awoke to find it a dream. And yet not all a dream, for you have come, my peerless love, and I ask of Heaven no greater joy, than to die with your dear hand in mine."

"But you will not die," she said in a low tone; "live for my sake."

"For your sake," he repeated with a sad, sweet smile that wrung her heart with bitterest anguish.

"Ah, my beloved, life would indeed be sweet if

I might spend it by your side; but I have lately set by too many death-beds to dare believe I can escape. But when I am gone, you can say that I lived thirty happy years, and your love was the crowning joy of my life."

Dr. Evert now came forward and begged that they would cease talking, lest the excitement would be injurious to Homer.

But Edna staid near, where his eyes might rest upon her face and tell his love, though a silence was imposed on her lips. But as hour after hour slipped away, they could not close their eyes to the fact that his condition was rapidly becoming more dangerous.

Whether this was caused by the excitement incident to their coming; or because he was approaching the third stage of the disease, which is the most dangerous; or for lack of proper nursing before they came; or perhaps a commingling of all these reasons, I cannot tell; but it was very evident that their patient was much worse than he had been in the morning.

About five o'clock in the afternoon, as Edna was sitting beside him bathing his head to relieve him of the intense heat, he looked searchingly into her face and inquired: "Edna, if I get well will you be my wife?" "If it is your wish," she replied.

A smile flitted across his face at the thought which her words implied, as though there might be a doubt about his wishing it. He said, "I feel that I am growing worse, and I wish you to remain beside me to the last, which, if we are married now, no one can say aught against; and if I die you would inherit my estate, and it would soothe the pain of death to know that when I am gone, you will wear my name, and live in my dear old home with my mother."

Edna raised her eyes inquiringly to Dr. Evert, and he, seeing the unspoken query, said,—

"I think it decidedly the best, in case of life or death, that you marry now."

"I will wed you when you choose," she said softly to Homer; and he eagerly replied, "Then let it be at once."

Dr. Evert hastily left the room to make the necessary arrangements. In a short time he returned, and took the position of watcher by the bedside, while Edna went to change her dress.

Fortunately, when packing her trunk she had put in a white dress which her mother had always admired on account of its filmy, cloud-like appearance.

She hastily made her toilet, and when she finished, the wish arose that she had some orange blossoms, that she might go to Homer as he dreamed, with them in her hands and hair.

At that moment Dr. Evert came to her door, bearing a large bouquet of orange blossoms, no difficult flower to obtain in that land. He broke off a cluster, and as he placed them in her hair he said with a sigh,—

"If it were not for the sad possibilities which confront us, this hour in which I give you to one so well worthy of you, would be a happy hour to me."

A pallor as of death swept over her cheeks at the fear which his words implied; and she looked at him with eyes whose imploring anguish stirred the fountain of his tears, as she said:

"O I cannot give him up! Is there no hope that his life may be saved?"

The doctor hesitated a moment and then replied:

"We will continue to hope, but we have much reason to fear."

In the room where Homer lay, there stood awaiting them the minister and Dr. Randall, also a nurse from the adjoining sick-room.

Through the open window the perfume was wafted from orange trees, and the setting sun threw his last lingering rays into the apartment, and one beam rested upon Homer's brown hair like a ray of glory.

He had been propped up in bed, and a hectic flush burnt upon his cheeks; his eyes beamed with unnatural luster, and his lips, covered by a silky brown mustache, were tremulous with feeling.

A hush, solemn as of death, fell over the group, as Dr. Evert entered with Edna. Her cheeks were white as the flowers she wore; and her white, filmy draperies floated around her, giving her an ethereal appearance.

Then began the solemn words, so full of grave import to all who take those vows upon themselves. Not once during the ceremony did Homer remove his gaze from Edna's face. At the last words, "I pronounce you man and wife," she stooped and pressed a kiss upon his brow.

"My dream," he murmured faintly. Then in in low tones, tremulous with joy, "My wife, my Eve, how can I thank my God for all his mercies?"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

LOOK ON A LOVE THAT KNOWS NOT TO DESPAIR.

Oh, do not die, beloved, our ways are one, And, like our hearts, cannot divided be; Combat death's angel that doth call thee on, And live for love and me

For many years thereafter Edna could never remember her wedding day, and the hours of hopeless watching which followed, without a rush of tears and quivering lips. All evening she sat by Homer in her bridal robes, trying for his sake to be calm, and with unwearied fingers bathing his head, and striving to allay his pain.

Yellow fever is a self-limited disease, not to be treated, but to be managed. All that can be done is to keep the patient alive until the disease has run its course. But with the best of nursing, Homer's condition rapidly became more dangerous. His sufferings were terrible to witness, and once, when it was necessary to move him, he fainted away.

Edna thought she had known sorrow before, but now there surged in her heart a pain, which in its depth and intensity is like no other.

Once when there was a short lull in the storm of pain which assailed him, he looked up into her face with a smile which made her heart ache, as he said: "My wife, you can never know what you have been to me, in tenderness and sweetness, since the day we met at your brother's grave. O, how my heart went out to you, and claimed you, soul of my soul. And now, after all these years of weary waiting, you have become indeed mine, only to hold my hand as I go down to the river of death. But, O my beloved, it is sweet to think that as the cold waves of the mystical river sweep upon me, my dying eyes can rest upon your face, and carry its sweet impress with me until I meet you at the Gates of Pearl.

Edna saw that from having witnessed so many deaths, his mind had become depressed, and he now looked upon her coming as a crowning mercy, that he might bestow upon her his name and wealth, and die in her arms.

She had often heard Dr. Evert speak of the power which the mind exerts over the body, and knew from what she had read of the nature of the malady, that in yellow fever the mind exerts a greater influence than in almost any other disease; and she believed that if she could only imbue Homer with the hope to live, his life might be saved.

Drs. Evert and Randall were holding a consultation in an adjoining room, and she had read in their eyes that they believed the case hopeless.

"Homer," Edna said in tones of imploring tenderness, "do you mean to die and break my heart? Have you no pity for me, or for your mother? I believe that you can live if you will. Think what misery your death would entail upon us-upon the friends that love you-upon the church at home. No one can ever be to them what you are; no one can ever do the good there that you can. Then think how happily we might live there, and the good we might do; I by my pen, and you by word of mouth. Oh, how sweet it would be for us to grow old together in the Master's service? You have spent only the morning hours in labor; will you leave me to labor on in the heat of the day, sad and alone? The Master has yet much work for you to do. Oh, do you not hear his cause calling to you, to live, and labor on, so that in the eventide of life we may enter God's Kingdom together, with our arms laden with precious sheaves?"

In the intensity of her emotion, Edna had fallen upon her knees beside the bed, and her face was raised in agonized, prayerful pleading.

Homer drew her to his breast. "My beloved, forgive me if I have caused you pain. The impression that I was to die had grown so strong that I had not thought to live. But now, God helping me, I will try to live, for your sake and His cause.

Edna was deaf to all their entreaties that she should go and rest. She resolutely staid by Homer, fearful to leave for a moment, lest she should be needed.

As the night waned there was a perceptible change for the better in the condition of the patient; and about sunrise, being almost free from pain and utterly exhausted, he fell asleep and slept for an hour.

When he awoke, much refreshed, his glance fell upon Edna, who sat beside him in her bridal dress.

She had fallen asleep in her chair, and the orange blossoms on her bosom and in her hair were crushed and withered; and even in sleep her face bore the impress of the sad thoughts which had swayed her mind for many hours, while the intense blackness of her hair and eyelashes contrasted strangely with her cheeks, which might have been of sculptured marble, so white and cold they looked.

Homer lay there and looked at her through a mist of pitying tears.

What a strange bridal hers had been, and what a sad and weary bride she looked! And all his chivalrous love and tenderness—which is the natural instinct of every true man—arose in rebellion against her fate. All the wealth of his loving heart and stainless manhood had been laid at her feet, and yet it had only brought her sorrow.

While he lay there, struggling with the desire to awake her and send her to her room to rest, and yet fearing to do so lest she would refuse to go and he would thereby deprive her of the rest which she was at present obtaining, Dr. Evert entered the room, and she opened her eyes wonderingly; then her glance fell upon Homer.

"You are better?" she questioned, eagerly.

"Much better," he replied; "thanks to your skill and words; I believe that I shall get well."

She pressed a kiss upon his brow, then moved away to the window to hide the glad tears which had rushed to her eyes.

After congratulating Homer upon his evident improvement, Dr. Evert stood beside Edna and said,

"I have been caring for a sufferer across the hall for the last two hours."

"How is he now?"

"Free from pain," he replied significantly. She shuddered, thinking of Homer.

"Have you noticed that it frosted last night?" Dr. Evert inquired; "My heart leapt with joy when I saw it. Yellow fever seldom continues after frost comes; I believe now there is very little danger of your taking it, and that relieves my mind of what has been a great anxiety."

"I had not thought of myself," she said simply.

"Edna," Homer called.

She went to him in sweet submissiveness.

His face was grave, but there was a flash of mirth in his brown eyes as he inquired,

"Did you not promise to obey me?"

"The ready color flew to her cheeks. "I did," she replied softly.

"Then hear my first command," he said smilingly. "Go to your room, and go to sleep."

"Do you always mean to be so dictatorial?" she queried archly. Then as Dr. Evert promised to sit with Homer, she obediently went away, returning in a few hours much refreshed by a dreamless sleep, and fresh toilet.

Homer steadily gained in health and in a few days was able to sit with them out upon the balcony.

O, what a happy convalescing was that; upon his face there rested a look of measureless content; and in his eyes a deep serenity, as of one at home with bliss.

A happy group they formed; and it was a delight to Homer, in those days when Dr. Evert was present, to call Edna by her new name. It was so beautiful to those two men, to whom she was so dear, to witness the tender, rosy bloom flush her cheeks, and the shy sweet glance of her eyes beneath her downcast lashes.

At last, when Homer had quite recovered his health, Dr. Evert bade them good-bye,—advising them to take a trip to Colorado to insure his perfect restoration to health.

This they accordingly did; and about a month after their marriage found themselves in a little town, which, amid a wilderness of beauty and strange sights, nestles lovingly at the foot of a great mountain.

They had received many letters of congratulation from their friends; but Flossie had been noticeably tardy in this respect.

However, a few days after their arrival there, Edna received a letter from Flossie, and read it with a smile that broke into a rippling laugh at the close.

"Are your correspondents usually so amusing?"
Homer smilingly inquired.

"No, indeed," she replied; "and as I fancy this letter was partially intended for you I will read it aloud:

"Mrs. Homer Atwood: —I hope I come before you with due respect and becoming humility. Nevertheless, Violet, I have somewhat against you. Did you not promise to float with me down the stream of time in maiden blessedness, happy in my love and desiring no other? and lo! soon as my back was turned you ran away and got married! O, most faithless of your sex! I am quite brokenhearted when I think of the inconstancy of womankind. Have I not worshipped you for years? Has not the wealth of my great loving heart been poured out at your feet like water? I doubt that I shall ever recover from this cruel blow. I have been laboring for the last two weeks upon a poem, which I tried to construct in such a manner that it would forcibly depict my heart-rending grief, but I find that my sorrow is too deep to be expressed

in smooth-flowing sentences; and as I am unaccustomed to writing poetry, I decided to let the matter rest until you come home and get you to write it for me. Violet, when I think of your cruel desertion of me, and my papa's audacity in giving you away without asking my consent, and the oddness of the whole affair, I am lost in wonderment. I have made papa recount the circumstance again and again. And when I asked him for the fortieth time how you looked, he laughed and said that the thought once struck him that you looked like an angel, but he recognized the incongruity of his simile, for angels are always pictured with fair hair. O, what a blessed crumb of comfort his words conveyed to me, for if angels are tow-headed then I must look angelic. How I did roll his words as a sweet morsel under my tongue. I am just on tip-toe with anxiety for your return, for I have heard wonderful accounts of a grand reception that awaits you. And now, my dear children, with a heart full of fond wishes I bid you good-bye, pausing only to beg that you will try to live in loving accord, 'striving earnestly after those things which make for peace;' and lest you fall into serious trouble, I will write you a motto, which I hope you will ever keep before your minds:

> "Birds in their little nests agree, And 'tis a shameful sight; When people of one family, Fall out, and chide, and fight.

"Notwithstanding I have been treated in a most heartless manner, I shall ever remain your loving

"Friend and sister, Flossie.

"P. S.—Earl Whitney is somewhere in Colorado. Perhaps you may meet him."

Homer laughed at the motto which Flossie had written for their admonition; then after a moment's reflection said,—

"Edna."

She looked up and saw in his eyes that loving look which she had not yet learned to meet without an additional pink color creeping into her cheeks.

"Edna, do you think it possible that you and I would ever quarrel?"

"No," she answered softly, "I have not so learned from my Bible. 'Let the wife see that she reverence her husband.' We can not quarrel with a being whom we reverence. Beside, I mean to obey you. I would obey the man I married out of self-respect, if for no other reason. But when love and the law of God require it, it will be my pleasure, as well as my duty to obey."

"My wife! My Eve," Homer said in tones of tenderest love; "how shall I reply to you? I will answer you in poetry, the language we both love best. "Edna, my darling, at last you have come,
To trust your future to me;
The angels of Heaven would be tempted to roam
Were it fair as I wish it to be;
Life's thorns from your path I'll clear away,
No rough winds on you shall blow:
A heaven of love shall woo your stay,
Till our heads are crowned with life's snow."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE NAME ON THE TREE.

And often now in evening gloom,
I sit with Memory by the tomb
Of buried hopes, whose withered bloom
Will ne'er again waft me perfume.

The little town where Homer and Edna were stopping was known far and wide for the beauty of its surroundings; and every day they went forth exploring the wonders of nature; climbing the mountain, or visiting the falls; gathering autumnal flowers, or collecting fossils; and every evening Homer preached in the school house, there being no church yet erected in the town.

His preaching met with great success, for his audiences were large, and he told them the old, sweet story of the cross with a natural eloquence and the joyous enthusiasm of one who has found that the Lord is indeed precious, and Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

One morning, as a soft October haze rested upon hill and valley, Homer and Edna went out for a ramble. Edna gathered a lot of beautifully tinted autumn leaves which she meant to preserve; and just as they were about to return to the hotel, she observed that a large pine tree which overshadowed a towering ledge of rocks, had recently been peeled and a name carved thereon.

Speaking of it to Homer, she said,-

"I wish I knew that name. That any one should take the trouble to carve his name in a spot which is so difficult of access as that evidently is, arouses my curiosity."

"Your wishes are my law," Homer gallantly replied, as he smilingly clambered up to where he might read the name.

"Earl Whitney!" he exclaimed a moment later.

"Earl!" Edna repeated; and for a moment the healthy color fled from her cheeks.

"Yes, Earl Whitney. He must be here now, for those letters are freshly made."

Then looking earnestly at her he said,—

"You do not fear to meet him, do you?"

"No," she answered, "I could meet him as readily as any of my old friends, but for him it will be painful."

"Yes," said Homer, as he gazed in the distance, "I do not doubt that after having loved you so long, to meet you just now, when his sense of loss is so recent, would be very hard to bear; and while I cannot grieve that he has lost, since I have won, I shall be very sorry for my old friend. I say friend, for such I shall regard him; there never was a spirit of rivalry between us."

That afternoon Edna sat alone in her room, and

her gaze rested upon the mountain, at the foot of which summer still lovingly lingered, while upon the top she could see the snow falling heavily. The scene pleased her greatly, and while she looked upon it with a smile upon her lips, Homer entered the room, and coming to her side, said,—

"I met Earl and Mr. Ross a few minutes ago. They will come this afternoon to pay their respects to you."

Edna saw a brooding shadow in Homer's eyes, and laying her hand upon his arm she looked up at him with eloquent, pleading face.

"You do not doubt my love?" she questioned softly.

"No, my darling," he answered, as he kissed her upturned face. "How could I when you have braved so much for me? It is of Earl I am thinking. I plainly saw that it distressed him to find us here, and I would gladly spare him pain."

It had pained Earl to find that they were there. Edna's marriage had been a terrible blow to him, notwithstanding he had given up all hope of winning her himself. Once when Ross remonstrated with Earl, telling him that he must cease to love Edna now that she was married, he replied,—"My love for her is as lasting as my life. Never until I cease to breathe, shall I cease to love her. There can be no sin in a love like mine; I love her as purely as some people love their God; for she was the deity whom I worshipped, the heaven around

which my hopes clustered; and I can no more forget her than Adam could cease to remember Eden, because he was separated from thence by the flaming sword."

Earl's greatest strength lay in his power of loving deeply; and painful as it was under the circumstances for him to meet Edna, still he determined that she should not be grieved by knowing how he suffered; and when he called at their hotel he played his part so perfectly, that he left her pleased and wondering that he bore it so lightly.

That evening Earl and Ross went to hear Homer preach. It was an act of courtesy upon Earl's part, rather than because he desired to hear the words of eternal life.

Shortly after they arrived there, Homer and Edna came in; and after he had found a seat for his bride, Homer mounted the rostrum,—with a princely bearing, Earl thought,—as though conscious of being the bearer of a Sovereign's message of love and mercy to a waiting people. His text was, "Our citizenship is in Heaven;" and as he told of the beauty and bliss of that land, and spoke of faith, repentance and baptism as the naturalization ordinance which makes us citizens of that kingdom, and extolled the glory of its King, the Prince of Peace, whose love has drawn all nations unto himself to crown him King of kings and Lord of lords,—as Homer delivered this royal welcome, many of his hearers signified their desire to become citizens

of that glorified land. But the words held no meaning for Earl. He sat under all that fire of eloquent pleading with ears that heard not. He was so much engrossed in weak self-pity, that he never realized that as he had weakly robbed himself of earthly love, he was also robbing his soul of eternal love and bliss.

Early the next morning Earl and Ross went to visit the Falls; and being wearied with their long ramble, they sat down to rest upon a large rock which was screened from the view of those who passed by by a mass of low shrubbery.

Earl was silent and moody; and his sadness was so infectious that Ross felt no desire to speak, until at last they heard a low, sweet laugh, and on looking up beheld Homer and Edna coming slowly up the mountain side.

Unwitting of [the proximity of Earl and Ross, Homer seated Edna quite near them upon a mossy boulder, and taking off his hat laid himself down upon the soft green grass at her feet.

Ross was about to make their presence known, but Earl whispered hoarsely,—

"For heaven's sake, do not speak; I would not for the world meet them just now."

Edna had gathered some autumn flowers, and these she began deftly weaving into a wreath, while Homer lay there watching with a musing smile the woven crown and the weaving hand.

Presently she paused, and looked around her with a little sigh of sweet content.

"How beautiful it is here," she said. "I think I would be content to live here always, never desiring any other home or companionship."

Homer smiled incredulously, saying,—

"You would soon grow weary of such a life, I think."

"You are no true Adam," she laughingly retorted. "He believed what his wife told him."

Homer smilingly replied,—

"That is true, but it had been better for them and for their descendants if he had held steadfastly to what he knew to be right. (Doubtless she reproached him afterward that he did not do so). And so when my Eve advocates some visionary idea, for her sweet sake I will weigh the subject well before I decide."

"It seems so odd that you should call me Eve," Edna said, with a musing smile.

"Does it?" he laughingly inquired. "I do so because it seems to me that we were made for each other; without you my life was as incomplete as was that of Adam; and as Eve must have been the very perfection of womanly gentleness and loveliness, her name seems to me most appropriate for you.

"Ah, what am I that God should bow From Heaven to choose a wife for me? Or what deserve he should endow, My home with thee?"

A beautiful blush suffused Edna's fair face, and unconscious of the jealous eyes that watched her through the screening shrubbery, she stooped and pressed a kiss upon the face that was looking up into her own with so much loving adoration.

After awhile they arose and continued their ascent up the mountain.

Edna insisted upon going higher and higher, until she at last grew weary, and by the time the descent was made she was quite faint from her unusual exertions, and from breathing the light air.

Homer had been announced to preach that night, and as Edna was too weary to accompany him as usual, she bade him a loving good-bye, promising to go immediately to rest.

An hour later she was sleeping heavily; the light was turned low, and as she lay there she seemed the very ideal of innocent beauty. One soft round arm, from which the lace sleeve had fallen away, was thrown back upon the pillow to form a snowy resting place for her lovely cheek; and she slept on, sweetly unconscious that in the lower part of the building a terrible foe was stealing toward her.

Presently the cry, "Fire! fire! fire!" rang out

upon the air; but the fire was under full headway when it was discovered, and the wind being high and the building being frame, it burned like tinder.

"Fire! fire!" rang out the appalling cry. But always a heavy sleeper, and being exceedingly weary now, she slept on.

There were but few persons in the building at that early hour, and as it had been Edna's custom to accompany Homer to the meetings, it was thought she was with him now.

So she slept on, unconscious that the mad flames were licking beneath her door.

The tumult grew louder outside—smoke filled the room—she awoke, pale and gasping for breath.

Weak and frightened, she crept to the window. A number of eager, excited people were gesticulating and shouting without; while the roar of the flames and the crash of the falling timbers made her shudder at her horrible fate.

Raising her arms Heavenward in one wild appeal to God to comfort Homer, when he should discover that she had perished in the flames, and committing her soul to Infinite love, she fell to the floor, stifled by the smoke, and gasping for breath.

CHAPTER XL.

"THERE IS BEGGARY IN THE LOVE THAT CAN BE RECKONED."

"And who that dear loved one may be,
Is not for vulgar eyes to see;
And why that early love was crost,
Thou know'st the best, I feel the most;
But few that dwell beneath the sun,
Have loved so long, and loved but one."

A thrill of excitement passed over the audience to which Homer was preaching, as the cry of "fire! fire!" was passed from lip to lip by those in the street. The town was small and had no facilities for quenching a fire, and hence that cry was a most appalling one.

Many persons immediately arose and left the building, while Homer, all unconscious of the locality of the fire, strove by a few words to bring the meeting to an orderly close.

Earl and Ross were sitting near the door, and at the first cry of fire they quietly arose and stepped out into the street.

The position of the fire was easy to descry, for the hotel, distant about two blocks, was wrapped in flames.

"My God!" Earl exclaimed, and without

another word sped down the street, followed by Ross.

When they reached the spot, an excited crowd had already gathered around the building. Eagerly scanning the faces of those present, Earl missed the one he came to find.

"Edna! Edna!" his voice rang out in agonizing tones above the din and tumult.

At that moment the flames lit up the front of the building, and he saw the beloved form standing at an upper window—saw her throw up her arms with a despairing gesture and fall backward; and instantly his mind took in the situation.

Madly he dashed to the entrance, but was held back by friendly force. "It is death to go in there," was shouted in his ear.

Struggling to free himself, he failed. Then dealing the man that held him an angry blow that sent him reeling against the wall, and eluding other detaining arms, Earl dashed up the burning stairway. The flames roared around him, and the stairs burned and crackled beneath his feet; but heedless of all danger to himself, he rushed on until he reached that white-robed figure lying prone upon the floor.

He knew that she had fainted; and snatching a blanket from the bed, he hastily enveloped the beloved form and lovely head. Then raising her in his strong arms—made doubly strong now by love and fear,—he bore her out into the hall.

The hot smoke rushed into his face and blinded him, and he staggered helplessly against the burning wall; then rallying, dashed down the burning stairway.

The flames burned his face and hands—the smoke blinded him and filled the air he breathed until he gasped for breath—the stair was like fire beneath his feet. When half way down the crowd saw him and cheered—a few more steps, and with a crash the stair-case gave way, and he fell backward, realizing as he did so, that Homer caught his precious burden from his arms, and then Earl lapsed into unconsciousness.

He knew not that a dozen hands, inspired by his heroism, and heedless of danger, snatched him from the flames, and after extinguishing his burning clothes, bore him hastily to his hotel.

When consciousness returned he was lying upon a bed and a physician was bending over him applying restoratives. Ross and Homer were standing near, and Earl observed a glance of pleased intelligence pass between them when they saw that he was conscious.

His burns speedily brought to his mind a realization of what had occurred; and writhing with pain he would fain have passed again into that merciful oblivion.

A tear fell upon his face, and looking up he beheld Homer bending over him.

Earl dimly wondered what could be the cause of Homer's emotion; then the thought flashed across his bewildered mind that perhaps Edna was dead.

Half rising from the pillow with fright at the terrible thought, he exclaimed,

"Where is Edna! Did I not save her after all?"

"She is safe," Homer replied, struggling to control his emotion.

"She is safe. Not one hair of her head is injured. But oh, my friend, I grieve for you. Gladly would I bear these painful burns in your stead."

Earl sank back on the pillow, smiling faintly.

"You have done many noble deeds; would you not let me have the honor of doing one? A soldier glories in his wounds, and I am proud of these burns, for they say that my life has not been altogether worthless, since I have saved her from a cruel death."

Homer instinctively felt that thanks from him would be displeasing to Earl; so he only said,—

"In saving her life you saved more than one heart from breaking; and now we hope to save the life which you so nobly risked for her."

Earl turned his head away sadly. "I do not wish to live. What has life for me? Nothing but humiliations and heart-aches. If I have my wish I shall die now—a not dishonorable death. If I

live on I may eventually fill a drunkard's grave, and I would rather die now."

Homer's heart ached for this rash, unprepared soul, so ready to plunge into the darkness of eternity; but there was little time for preparation now.

The mad flames had cruelly blistered Earl's face and hands, and the hot smoke had scorched his lungs until he was spitting blood.

Occasionally during that long, terrible night, Homer stole from Earl's bedside to carry news of his condition to Edna, who had also been brought to this hotel.

A lady friend sat with her, not that she needed care or nursing, for she lay upon her bed white and faint, seldom speaking; and only an occasional sob, and a glimmer of tears upon her lashes, told that she was not sleeping.

At last she begged so piteously to see Earl, that they deemed it best to comply with her request; so in the gray dawn of the morning, weak, and leaning heavily upon Homer's arm, Edna crept into the room where the sufferer lay.

A cooling lotion covered his face, and the poor hands which had so bravely carried her through the flames were swathed in linen. His face was turned away, and he had not heeded her step.

"Earl," she called, in faltering tones, as she stood beside him, "Earl."

He quickly turned to her a face upon which

a glad welcome shone, notwithstanding it was marred from all semblance of former beauty.

"Oh, have you come?" he said, in tones of rejoicing. "I did not want to die until I could see with my own eyes that you were indeed unharmed."

Glad tears that relieved the feverish pain in his eyes stole down his cheeks, as he looked at the lovely face, unscarred, not one hair of her head injured.

"Earl," she sobbed, "you have saved my life, but oh! Earl, Earl, it almost breaks my heart to think of what you have suffered for me."

Homer felt the scene to be too sacred for observers, and he withdrew to a distant part of the room, followed by the doctor and Ross.

Earl looked at his wounded hands where Edna's tears had been falling, and said,—

"Ah, I am causing you tears again. For many months I have caused you nothing but tears; but that will all be over soon, I trust. Those tears should heal my burns, but I hope they will not; for if I live on I will doubtless sink into a dishonored grave, while if I die now, my friends will cherish my memory; and you will perhaps stand sometime beside my grave and say, 'Dear soul, he loved me well! He proved his love by giving his life for mine!'

"Yes, thank God! I saved your life; that thought charms away the terrors of death, and

now I have a request to make of you, (no need to grieve your tender heart by adding that it is the last). I wish you to use all your talents in pleading against intemperance. Think of what I have suffered because of it,—shame, humiliation, the blighting of my life's fair aims, the loss of your love, my soul's salvation,—think how terrible are the chains of this grievous sin, which, though I struggled so hard to break, yet I could not. But I could face death for you. Yea, I would have faced ten thousand deaths for love of you."

After a pause, Earl said,—"You do not think that now, since I have saved your life, which must be precious in God's sight, he will shut the door of Heaven upon me, do you?"

Edna replied, tearfully, softly, "God is full of tender love and mercy, not willing that any should perish; but if we repent of our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

"Repent!" Earl repeated. "Have I not been sorry for my sins every day of my life? Yet when the temptation came again, I did the same thing over again."

"Ah," she said, "that is not true repentance. True repentance is a sorrow for, and a turning away from sin. Oh, that you would let the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, take away your sins. There is power in the name of the Son of God to help us overcome temptation.

Sheltered as my life has been, I have known temptation; but the whispered name of Jesus has been sufficient to shield me from all harm."

Earl turned away his head, sighing wearily. "These things should be attended to in time of health; my suffering body claims all my attention now. I have one more request to make of you; forgive me that in doing so I must touch upon the past. The night I told you of my love, and you promised to be my wife, you carried in your hand a cluster of pansies; and my request is, that when I am dead, you will place over my heart such a cluster of pansies,—heartsease, some call them. Perhaps then this aching heart of mine will find rest."

Earl turned away his eyes that he might not see her fast falling tears. After a little he sighed,—

"O, my eyes burn, and my head aches so! Would you put your hands upon my brow? Perhaps it would ease the pain." She did as he requested.

"Dear, cool hands," he murmured; "thank God

I saved them from the cruel flames!"

A little later, hearing their voices no longer, the others in the room drew near the bed, and saw that Earl was sleeping sweetly, like a weary child.

CHAPTER XLI.

"THE PAST UNREGRETTED, THE FUTURE SURE."

"As some lone bird, without a mate, My weary heart is desolate; My own sad thoughts I cannot shun, But ever love, and love but one."

Death will not come for the wishing, and though Earl lay for many days near the dark portal, death at last withdrew, and the angel of life led him away from the dark and dreamless sleep which he craved.

Homer and Edna staid with Earl until he had entirely recovered; then they returned home to the busy, happy life awaiting them.

The following spring Ross and Ivy were married; and shortly after that event, Beulah returned home, sad and alone, except for the companionship of a puny, black-eyed baby.

Even she—woman of the world as she was—could only abhor the man she had married, when she discovered his true nature. Just what she had learned that caused her to leave her husband so unceremoniously never transpired; for she resolutely refused to speak of him. Henceforward she was a hardened, haughty woman; living only for her child, she took no pleasure in aught beside; and if Earl sometimes fell a victim to intemper-

ance—as often happened in the years that followed—Beulah would reproach him with so much scorn and bitterness, that he was glad to go to Ivy to be sympathized with and wept over.

Sometimes it seemed to Earl that he must have given up the battle, had it not been for the sympathy and encouragement which he received from Ross and Ivy.

But still it was the same old story; sometimes he would refrain from the use of intoxicants for months; then would come an unwonted temptation and he would fall,—and then, oh, the shame and humiliation that followed!

I know not if he may yet be saved. If so, it will be as by fire; but of this I am sure,—he was cast in a noble mould, and would have lived a happy and virtuous life, had it not been for the awful evil which has blighted so many lives, and ruined so many homes.

Though many pressing invitations were given him, Earl steadily refused to visit at Dr. Evert's. But every summer he made a pilgrimage to the little town where he had saved Edna's life; and there in the silence of the great hills he reviewed his life,—its past and present; his hopes, and aims, and failures, and humiliations; and tried to gain strength to begin the battle anew.

Edna's life was full of happiness and faithful labor, he knew; for several of her literary works

had been sent him, directed in Homer's handwriting, and they all breathed a sunny spirit, full of bouyant faith and hope, which did him good for days to come.

Sometimes Homer wrote strong, cheering letters; letters which often revealed to Earl that the life he had saved from the flames was proving a blessing to many hearts.

Though often invited, Earl refused to visit them. No, he told himself, Edna did not need him, her life was full. His presence could bring her no added joy.

Once when Ivy hinted that he might yet find some fair girl to be his wife, Earl replied,—

"I do not look for marriage blessings now; I would not bind another to my blighted life; beside, I have no heart to give. If I had been more worthy I would be as happy now as is given to any of God's creatures; but now, I live only to regret.

"O that word Regret! There have been nights and morns when we have sighed:

"'Let us alone, Regret! We are content
To throw thee all our past, so thou wilt sleep
For aye. But it is patient, and it wakes;
It hath not learned to cry itself to sleep,
But plaineth on the bed that it is hard.'"

Edna's literary works bring her large pecuniary returns; and she often says that blessings seem to flow both ways from them; for she has much reason to believe that they accomplish some good in the world where they are so gladly welcomed; and the money which she receives for them, she conscientiously applies to benevolent purposes, and in providing liberally for her mother and aged grandmother.

She often visits her mother, sometimes accompanied by Homer, sometimes by Flossie, but oftener alone.

Mrs. Slater seldom returns those visits; the old scenes awake in her heart too many pains that never heal, and full lightly sleep. She ages rapidly, and feels that she would not shrink to enter the phantom barque, with the boatman pale, if after all these weary heart-aches she may at last find—Peace.

To Dr. Evert and his wife, the years glide peacefully by. The storms of life, which rage so fiercely upon the shores of the lives of others, pass gently by them. Their hearts are fragrant with the memories of days wisely spent. They glory in the successes of their adopted child, and rejoice that in caring for her, "the seeds of kindness were not sown on the rocks to die."

Mrs. Atwood lives on, the revered member of her son's happy family, surrounded by a halo of love and honor. To her, Edna is indeed as a beloved daughter, and often Mrs. Atwood lays her hand fondly upon her son's arm, and says,—"God loved this man, and chose a wife for him—the true one."

Edna has certain hours of each day that are set

apart for study and writing—hours which are broken in upon by no one but Flossie, who flashes in and out at her own sweet will, restrained by no laws or rules, and though it trespasses upon her time, Edna is always glad to lay down book or pen, to converse with, or to caress and be caressed by her darling Flossie.

At one time Edna feared they were going to lose Flossie. A young ministerial friend of Homer's had been spending his summer vacation with them, and meeting Flossie there, was quite bewildered by her saucy ways and bright eyes. Flossie seemed to be not at all averse to him; but when he asked her to be his wife, she refused him tearfully, reluctantly, more as if she were refusing the position which she would have to occupy as his wife, than as a refusal of himself.

She naively confided to Edna afterward that she did like him a *little bit*; but she could never think of being a minister's wife.

"I do not find such a position very trying," Edna smilingly replied.

"O well!" Flossie retorted, "Homer is such a sunny-tempered fellow, one would never imagine him to be a minister at all."

"And why should not ministers be happy?" Edna inquired. "Surely, true Christians ought to be the happiest beings in the world; for they have all that this world contains of real pleasure, and

have the promise of eternal bliss in the world to come."

"Yes," Flossie replied, "I know all that. But you know quite well that people always associate in their minds a sort of funereal sadness in connection with ministers. Why, I remember being grievously shocked when I was a little girl by hearing a minister whistling; I thought that, being a minister, he was committing the unpardonable sin by whistling.

"It is no use talking," Flossie added, "I could never be a minister's wife; beside I am very happy at home with papa and mamma, and I know it would grieve them terribly to lose me; so I shall go directly home, and I will try to get all this foolishness out of my head by finishing a picture which I have had upon the easel for some time. It is a love scene, and I am not certain that the figures might not be taken to represent you and Homer. At any rate I intend to present it to you as a companion piece to the sketch I made the day of the picnic. But there are no tears in this picture; no troubles to darken the sky; it is radiant with cloudless sunshine—a true picture of my Violet's present life."

At this she was engaged when last I saw her. Dear, winsome Flossie; it is with reluctance that I bid her good-bye. Life has much in store for her; and her story is not yet told.

To Homer and Edna the years pass happily by.

Their minds and hearts are filled with the great aims and purposes of life, and they stamp each golden hour with the seal of some kindly deed ere it wings its way to God. And thus they live on, happy in each other's love, and believing that only a veil separates them from the "Holy of holies," and the glory which shall be revealed.

And so with her feet treading paths of pleasantness, the fragrance of good deeds rising like incense about her, the rainbow of peace over-arching her sky and the sunlight of earthly and Heavenly love shining upon her, we bid good-bye to— Flossie's Violet.

THE END.



